CRITIQUING MASS NEWS MEDIA:
AN AUDIENCE-CENTERED MODEL

By

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To Frances, Aaron and Daniel, who have been
endlessly patient.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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Criticism of mass news media in the United States is
most often categorized by two typologies--the institutions
doing criticism and the models of criticism employed.
Identifying a unifying theoretical or methodological
groundwork for each model is problematic. Much criticism
of news media is driven by the manifest content of the work
rather than by a unifying theoretical approach. This study
examines the most frequently identified models of news
media criticism in the United States: Social Responsibili-
ty, Critical Theory/Cultural Studies, Marxist, and
Empiricist. It also examines models from the discipline of
literary criticism. Each model is analyzed according to
how it treats critique as a moral process, the nature of
truth, the newsgatherer, the content and context of the
message, and the audience. A principal weakness of each

model is its inappropriateness for use by audiences. In
each case, the model requires an expert discourse unavail-
able to most. Further, few of the models identify an ap-
propriate moral basis for critique. Neither do they iden-
tify or acknowledge the model of truth each employs. A
proposed model is synthesized from the existing models that
identifies the audience as the most appropriate critic, es-
tablishes the tradition of western moral philosophy as an
appropriate theoretical basis for critique, and embraces
the coherence model of truth. Based on current models of
literary criticism, the proposed model argues for the
audience's own common-sense discourse as an appropriate
methodology for conducting critique. In an attempt to il-
lustrate the degree of usefulness of the proposed model to
the audience, the model is applied to a series of news
stories about the execution of Theodore Bundy. Further in-
quiry into an appropriate model for mass media criticism
should focus on the role of academics. In the present ex-
amination that role is posited as twofold. First, it is
meta-critique: the examination of the appropriate theoreti-
cal and methodological bases for critique, and the study of
how audiences use their critiques to make mass media useful
to them. Second, it is pedagogy: training audiences to
trust and use the theoretical and methodological bases they
already possess.

CHAPTER 1
THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The literature of criticism of mass news media in
the United States is extensive and impressive. It embraces
critics from the news profession, including Lippmann (1920,
1922), Sinclair (1970), Mencken (1924) and Liebling (1961),
academic critics including Christians (1977) and Lemert
(1981, 1989), and those who have managed the crossover be-
tween the two, including Bagdikian (1971, 1972), Gans
(1980) and others. It is most often characterized by two
typologies--the institutions doing criticism, including
academe and the profession, and the models of criticism
adopted, including social responsibility, critical
theory/cultural studies, Marxist and empiricist (Lemert,
1989; Merrill & Lowenstein, 1971). While categorization
may be relatively simple, finding a unifying theoretical,
moral or even methodological framework for each approach is
more problematic. The reason for the difficulty is fairly
obvious. To a large extent, criticism of mass media has
been treated post facto, resulting in a body of work that
is driven by the manifest content of the work being
critiqued rather than by any unifying approach or

underlying theory recognizable in the critique. Instead of a meta-critically grounded critique that is the hallmark of a mature discipline, the critique of mass news media becomes a product review--anecdotal, idiosyncratic and inclined to treat the news as a commodity. As Starck points out, "A weakness in the American press system that has been noted by too few individuals and even fewer journalism schools is the absence of constant, systematic scrutiny of press performance" (1972, p. 23).

No facet of media criticism has escaped the product-review syndrome. Academe, long recognized as the locus for formal critique in other disciplines, enjoys no such recognition in the field of mass communication. There is no academic tradition of formalized, institutionalized criticism as a subdiscipline in mass communication in the same way that literary criticism, for example, is taken for granted as an appropriate field of inquiry (Lazarsfeld, 1948, Jensen, 1960). The paucity of meta-critique makes problematic any attempts to compare the characteristics of a mature discipline such as literary criticism with the criticism of mass news media, and such attempts must often be based on indirect evidence. Mass media criticism still begs for an inquiry into how to build a theory, a model, or at least a methodology, for there is also no academic tradition of meta-criticism in mass communication--the critical examination of how to do criticism.

In the pages that follow, I shall examine the principal critical orientations in mass communication and specific critical approaches from the discipline of literary criticism. From that examination I shall attempt to synthesize a proposed model for conducting the critique of mass news media, and to test that model on news stories that arose from a single event. The model will consist of both theoretical and methodological bases, and it will also address the role of meta-criticism.

<u>Background</u>

Despite the ever-growing number of examples of markedly different orientations present in academic and in popular criticism (see Lemert, 1989), much mass media criticism in the United States, for at least the last four decades, has been grounded in the social responsibility theory of the press (Brown, 1974; Christians, 1977). That domination by the social responsibility model frequently means that questions about appropriate theoretical and ideological underpinnings for a critical model go begging. To declare that the role of the mass news media is to be providers of information for a citizenry that can then participate meaningfully in self-governance (Blumler, 1983) forces assumptions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the political and ideological system under which both the mass news media and the citizens that it purports to serve function (Carey, 1974). More frequently addressed, but just as problematic, are questions of the

methodology appropriate to a critical model. The anecdotal evidence often used by critics within the news profession (Lemert, 1989) is not generalizable. The empirical methodology that arose from the same logical positivist model that led to the social responsibility model's notion of the enlightened, self-determining citizen has been shown to be severely limited (see, e.g., Popper, 1957, on the doctrine of falsification).

The absence of a rigorous academic meta-critique exacerbates the problem, because the assumption that the social responsibility model is the "right" one (Carey, 1974) has become so ingrained that practically all criticism is either based on that assumption or exists as a reaction to it. Criticism, therefore, becomes post facto.

If we reject the tradition of accepting as serious a post facto critique whose theoretical base has seldom been examined, the problem becomes obvious: How shall our inquiry be directed? If it concerns itself with what should replace that unexamined critique, other questions arise. What is the appropriate basis for a new model?

One temptation, perhaps, is to propose a teleological--that is, goal-oriented--prescription for performance, in the manner of Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler (1987), who offer a schematic of loyalties based on universalizable principles from moral philosophy. Similarly, Blumler (1983) posits a model for communication research that evaluates the extent to which a particular practice

promotes or attains democratic values. Another approach is
to recommend specific criteria for performance (see, e.g.,
the Hutchins Commission report, 1947). But again, by as-
suming rather than addressing the appropriateness of a par-
ticular theoretical and methodological base, the same kinds
of problems arise. What is to be examined? Must we at-
tempt to derive the intent of the producer, or should we
concentrate on the manifest content of the message? What
are the standards of proof or disproof to be employed?
What is the nature of the evidence we accept? There is a
practical problem as well: Will those who are the subjects
of or affected by the critique accept it? With practical-
ly no legal constraints in the United States, the press is
limited in its performance only by economics and, to some
extent, public opinion.

But, to resort to cliches, news gatherers suspect,
quite rightly in many cases, that their critics have an ax
to grind, or that the nature of the criticism, and its
direction, depends on whose ox is being gored. Still, the
news media are reluctant anymore to ignore outside criti-
cism completely. The reason is the credibility gap,
whether or not it actually exists. Even if the credibility
crisis appears to be artifact, and Americans generally con-
sider their news media to be adequate and credible, there
is a persistent view among the news media themselves that
both audience members and academics are ignorant of media
practices and that their critiques are of no use.

For whom, though, should the critique be useful?
Just as the individual and his or her system define what
news is, or ought to be, so news in part defines the social
system. If the news does not also define the individual,
it at least helps define the role the individual plays in
the social system. For Tuchman (1978), news constructs so-
cial meanings for events. Phillips (1977) identifies jour-
nalism as the most important institutional mode of
communication that impacts on the public. A model for the
critique of mass news media should acknowledge those inter-
relationships. Like the news that it critiques, the criti-
que itself will be a product of an individual's and a
society's needs, experiences and perceived roles in a so-
cial system.

Critique is by definition a prescriptive enterprise,
and so too is forging a critical model. The effort is
bound to introduce value-laden terms, a vexation to many,
pure anathema to others, but in fact merely symptomatic of
the larger problem: How are we to deal with values, with
what is good or preferable?

The answer lies in a reconsideration of the role of
moral philosophy. I hope to make that clear presently.
First, it may be helpful to consider some of the problems
that we encounter in seeking a such a groundwork.

The notion of critique implies the possibility of
change, so it also implies the possibility of control over
the outcome of a process. Agency is at the heart of the

notion of control. Like all artifact, news as a product is contingent, the result of a process of decisions, tacit or explicit. Critique cannot be approached purely in an empirical fashion, because empiricism has never found a way to deal adequately with agency. At the heart of that problem is the difference between reasons and causes. For our purposes, it must be more than a semantic distinction. Briefly, causes are observable; they are subject to empirical test, and lead frequently to the true power of logic, prediction. Reasons embrace the notion of agency, and introduce the idea of cognition. To use the old saw of philosophy of science, blinking has a cause, winking has a reason.

Obviously, notions such as standards and values imply the intervention of agency, taking us outside the realm of empiricism's great achievements in physical science. We cannot speak of whether lightning ought to strike, of whether the decision to strike or not is somehow up to the lightning bolt. It is similarly nonsensical to attempt to critique causal outcomes.

The foundation of critique lies in the notion of agency, that certain activities may be caused in the empirical sense, but that they may also be bound inextricably with reasons that are part of the cognitive process but are unobservable, except as they manifest themselves in actions or in artifacts produced by actions. If we accept agency, we must likewise accept that a critical

approach must acknowledge the contingent nature of all artifact. In the same way that Marx (see D'Amico, 1981) and later Popper (1957) showed with history, there is nothing inevitable about the news we read or watch.

Theory is part of empiricism, the basis for the vigor of empirical testing and its hoped-for result, prediction. Without theory to guide testing, empiricism--the scientific method--becomes useless. But of what help is theory in the realm of agency, of reasons, of contingency? For every apparent explanation, whether causal or rational--that is, arrived at by using reason--there may be thousands of others that are equally plausible. A theory that embraces all possibilities is so weak as to be powerless for prediction. A theory that is sufficiently narrow for predictive power may simply be wrong, and work more from coincidence than from its own power.

How we derive the theories that guide our observations is a question for metaphysics; philosophy exists to help us identify and unravel our biases. One such bias is the notion that because it deals with agency, and with prescription, critique must fail as science.

As Hume (see Selby-Bigge, 1970) showed, the notion of constant conjunction--the reproducibility of observation on which much of empiricism rests--is an ideological assumption. Wittgenstein (1953) subsequently demonstrated that constant conjunction implies assumptions about the infallibility of identity. Identity is the notion that an

observation that appears to correspond with reality will always correspond with reality in an identical way, regardless of the number of observations. With no way to prove those assumptions, we establish identity for our own purposes. Identity relationships are constituted by a community. There is no identity of meanings, or at least none that can be proven. Therefore there is nothing inherent about logic. The inviolability of the logical rules that are the basis for our scientific notions is itself based on the notion that we must draw certain conclusions based on the identity of meanings.

Ong (1988) argues that logic is the artifact of a particular technology--writing. Indeed, Derrida (1978) contends that in a post-literate culture, symbolic logic is the wrong model. It does not take into account the possibility likelihood of myriad meanings in a world made broader, an audience and participants made larger, by mass communication. The result is a multiplicity of meanings from the same symbols, the world as pun, the pre-eminence not of logic but of noise.

Wittgenstein (1953) observed that identity is constituted by agreement through common experience and context, not by independent observation. But his conclusion does not preclude the possibility of systematic critique. It does reminds us that even in the physical sciences, where observation is not confounded by the notion of

agency, theory will to some extent dictate methodology, and methodology will dictate data.

In the practice of criticism, how we proceed to understand is much more problematic. The reductionist strategy--that all actions can ultimately be described as causally derived behavior--is fatally flawed. Removing the notion of intentionality removes the possibility that there can be social science. The notion of agency is crucial. We assume there are reasons for our actions. If social science becomes scientific, it can't treat agency, and becomes irrelevant. If it treats the notion of agency, it can't be scientific.

Winch (1958) describes the dilemma in terms of rule-governed behavior. Rule-governed behavior requires intrinsic concepts, he says. Causal accounts require no such concepts: Events in the physical world would occur whether we understood them or not. Rules have two distinguishing characteristics: They can be violated, and that violation carries sanctions of some sort. Both characteristics imply agency, the possibility of choice, and hence greater complexity in establishing their intelligibility. To speak similarly of causal accounts is absurd.

To Winch, the causal account of the world is a belief, one that is no more authoritative than any other belief system. His observation may help open our eyes, but it isn't particularly helpful otherwise. Horton (1967) suggests that rationality is the criterion for making rule

-governed behavior intelligible. There are several prob-
lems with his approach. One is Rorty's (1979) observation
about the power of contexts to affect the questions we ask.
If rational behavior is to be defined contextually, and it
seems that it must be if it is to be considered rational,
then rationality becomes too broad a criterion to be of
much help to our understanding. In certain contexts, prac-
tically anything can be rational.

Phillips (1987) reminds us of another problem. In
abstracting explanations from behavior, we may not be
identifying the actual reason for behavior, but merely es-
tablishing a convenient way for us to understand it. Our
understanding may be heuristic rather than incarnate, and
so the test of rationality becomes useless.

Putnam's (1981) aphorism that meaning is in the
world, not in our heads begs the question. Where is under-
standing? It certainly doesn't appear to be synonymous
with meaning.

Whether we attempt to proceed from an observed ac-
tion to the belief that may have occasioned it, or from
belief to predicting action, the attempt to identify
rationality as the key to understanding human actions seems
doomed. Still, we cannot dismiss our failure as ir-
relevant. As Margolis (1984) reminds us, if inten-
tionality is ignored, there can be no social science, no
understanding of how we get from what we believe to what we
do. Rationality is constitutive, for if we resort to

logic--or prediction, to put it in operational terms--we
have again abandoned social science.

Theory--the notion of what should go on, the stan-
dard by which data are examined--is prescriptive. It is
grounded in a belief in constant conjunction and the
permanence of identity notions. If that is so, our
theories have their origins in reasons rather than in
causes.

The flaw is not in the theory-making. It is instead
in the failure of scientists--and critics--to acknowledge
that theories that attempt understanding beyond explanation
are by definition prescriptive.

The answer lies in finding a theoretical justifica-
tion for critique that will allow us to conduct the criti-
que in a manner that allows the task of doing so to in-
crease our knowledge. Such an answer might also serve as
predictor for our own actions: How ought we to act, and
what are the criteria by which we are to judge that deci-
sion?

If theory--in the present case, the critical model--
is prescriptive, then our critical understanding should be
as well. If human behavior is violative of what we have
prescribed that it should be, by examining it in the light
of prescription we can still make it more understandable,
just as Popper's (1957) notion of falsification makes our
scientific knowledge more reliable. Prescription even

becomes predictive to the extent that individuals and societies become conditioned to follow it.

If the idea of rule-governed behavior carries with it the notion of violation and sanctions, then it likewise carries prescription as the basis for those notions. And all three become appropriate objects for investigation.

If we acknowledge that our confidence in our own patterns of rationality is based not on logic or even on empiricism, but on the coherence of our patterns of rationality with our own culture, we cannot escape the notion that that culture delineates the criteria for judging a practice to be "good." Our account of "objective" reality is in the language we use; it is foolish to think otherwise.

The obverse should be apparent. The same complexities are at work in the culture of the subjects we study, and the artifacts the culture produces, whether the culture is large-scale (the United States), or more limited (the newsroom of a daily newspaper). It is pointless to attempt to achieve an understanding that is of the same nature as our understanding of the physical sciences, but it is far from pointless to attempt to achieve knowledge through the critical process. As Kant (1785/1969, 1787/1965) urged that critique should limit knowledge to leave room for faith, so Wittgenstein (1953) envisioned a transcendental critique that would preserve thinking in the natural sciences.

The absence of a formal theoretical model remains perhaps the biggest obstacle to the notion of critique as discipline. The social responsibility model, for example, purports to be grounded in Mill's teleological philosophy of utilitarianism (Merrill, 1983). That is, the model measures the value of an action against whether the consequences of that action will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number. But a fundamental and nearly universal misapprehension about the social responsibility model and the utilitarian philosophy that purports to underlie it has clouded the role of criticism in a social responsibility model.

The forebear of social responsibility in the United States was the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey and William James (Carey, 1987). Pragmatism arose from Kant's proposition of a coherence theory of truth to replace the discredited correspondence theory. But the original apprehension of the pragmatic theory of truth--one that is reducible to coherence--was subsequently corrupted into a justification for self-interest. After Dewey and James, American pragmatism came to see the truth of a belief as dependent on the consequences that followed adoption of the belief. Beliefs became good or bad instead of true or untrue.

But Carey also notes Russell's admonition about pragmatism: Any philosophy that makes the consequences of a belief the test of its truth gives to the powerful the

right and the power to determine those consequences, and
hence the right to define good and bad. To Carey, prag-
matism of that sort is a valueless philosophy, one that
led, for example, to the rise of a kind of public relations
practice that manages public attitudes through business
propaganda.

The messages of such pragmatism are no longer true
or false; they are good or bad according to whether they
benefit those who disseminate them. Whether those who
receive the messages benefit as well comes to matter
little, because by the nature of the process their own
beliefs and value systems are co-opted by a hegemenous
authority. People come to believe that what they are hear-
ing is good for them, and so it is. What is passed off as
the philosophical underpinning of a critical model, then,
often is little more than post facto self-justification,
useless as a theoretical base for a critical approach.
Boorstin (1960, 1971) defined American pragmatism as a con-
suming interest in the appearance of things. To Boorstin,
advertising reshaped our concept of the truth. The early
pragmatists made the distinction between truth and good-
ness; modern pragmatism does not. We have come to accept
that truth and credibility are synonymous; if a belief has
credibility, it is true. Hence the obsession of late by
newspapers with the credibility of their product.

Lazere (1987) summarizes the upshot of the evolution
of truth-as-credibility. Journalism schools began

concentrating on empirical, value-free research and pre-
professional training instead of on criticism. Indeed, my
own review of course catalogs at 28 schools and departments
of journalism and communications in the United States shows
that only four offer courses labeled ethics or criticism.
Another eight institutions assert that those issues are in-
cluded in the syllabi of other courses.

In the news profession, the standard of credibility
led inevitably to a model of news as a product to be
consumed or rejected by a mass audience rather than as a
presentation of information that focused on the needs of
the individual receiving and attempting to understand it.
Graham (1990), for example, documents the impact of the
rise of the "info-tainment" model at CBS News in the mid-
1980s. Similarly, Powell quotes Allen H. Neuharth, former
chairman of the Gannett newspaper chain, on his news orga-
nization's model:

> Basically we respond to our reader studies.
> Whatever diet the readers want, we custom
> tailor the paper for that diet. If the
> readers in Ithaca want to know the school
> menus for all the schools in the area, we'll
> give them that. That's no great practice of
> journalism, but it's what the readers want.
> (1987, p. 209)

Modern pragmatism came to replace a true utilitarian
philosophy under which pragmatic truth becomes that which
results in the greatest good for the greatest number, and
the Kantian notion of coherence, under which truth becomes
a process of learning enough about ourselves to know how we

perceive and deal with the world. So when Lippmann (1920, 1922) attempted to establish truth as the ultimate standard for journalists, his prescription was weak, and carried no curative power.

The rise of a social responsibility model based on modern pragmatism has likewise led to the increase in specialization in mass media studies, to abandonment of a holist approach in a social science that is entirely inter-reactive.

What criticism exists has narrowed itself correspondingly. It has embraced the pragmatism of social responsibility. By establishing a standard of evaluating beliefs and subsequent actions only in terms of their consequences, the critical model ignores other criteria. More fundamental questions are ignored or shouldered aside as irrelevant, unworkable, impractical, or not subject to test.

Until recently, much of the criticism of the press in the United States--particularly that engaged in by the press itself--appeared to accept and ground itself in the social responsibility model. (An exception was that of the so-called "watchdog" groups, which often modeled their criticism on an ideological or religious belief.) Examples of social responsibility-based critiques include Gieber (1964), Griffith (1974), Westin (1982), and Shaw (1984).

More recently, examples from other theoretical or ideological models have appeared. They include critical

theory- and popular culture-based critiques such as Gitlin (1980, 1987) and Collins et al. (1986), and post-Marxist critiques (Schiller, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c). Most make at least some attempt to establish a theoretical--or at least an ideological--base for their critique. Several also offer a profoundly different conception of news media than what is accepted by social responsibility.

Literary critics have paid increasing attention recently to the mass news media as elements of popular culture, although their critiques often address entertainment forms rather than news. (But it is frequently argued by literary and cultural critics that, in terms of audience impact and discrimination, the two forms are indistinguishable. See, e.g., Allen, 1987, and Barthes, 1972). Examples of approaches using the techniques of literary criticism include Miller (1988), Allen (1987), Holland and Quinn (1987), Kahn and Neumaier (1985), Lazere (1987), and Manoff and Schudson (1986). Holland and Quinn and Kahn and Neumaier apply the principle of deconstruction to mass media--dismantling the predominant mass media into their component parts, both technological and ideological.

The goal is to allow whatever group is underrepresented by the "mainstream" media to reconstruct the media to create their own understanding and secure their own forms of representation. An example is the late Abbie Hoffman's creation of counterculture media events--throwing dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock

Exchange to watch traders scramble for them, or running a pig for president. Because of his own perceptive analysis of how news works, Hoffman's "events" were almost certain to be covered by the mainstream mass media, ensuring coverage of a decidedly outside-the-mainstream group.

Finally, the discipline of rhetorical criticism has recently begun to address the product of the mass news media as persuasive messages. An example is Gronbeck (1988).

Meta-criticism

The social responsibility model of criticism has not been without advocates of a meta-critique. Within a year of the publication of the Hutchins Commission report, Lazarsfeld (1948) called on journalism teachers and researchers to recognize mass media criticism as a discipline. But mass communication scholars have been slow to accept the challenge. To illustrate, from its inception in 1924 through 1963, Journalism Quarterly published but 60 articles--of a total of 1,517--dealing with mass media ethics, criticism or defense. Another 62 articles during the same period dealt with press performance.

Meta-criticism is not absent from the scholarly research literature. Broadly, it falls into three categories--methodology, ideology and technology. Examples of meta-criticism in methodology include Lemert (1981, 1989), who argues that critical analysis is largely missing from news media criticism, and that empirical methods and

social science techniques can be used to evaluate and crit-
icize the performance of the news media. Other examples of
methodological meta-criticism focus on sources of criti-
cism, including ombudsmen (Ettema & Glasser, 1987) and Bag-
dikian (1972), mass media codes of ethics (Merrill, 1975,
1983), journalism reviews (Bertrand, 1978), and press coun-
cils.

The primary examples of ideology-based meta-
criticism are by now familiar to most scholars. They
include Carey's (1979, 1983) call for a cultural studies
approach, Lang and Lang's (1983) caution against polariza-
tion and politicization of the scholarly debate, and Mosco
and Herman's (1981) exhortation to recognize the impact of
the communications revolution from the viewpoint of radical
social theory.

Finally, and perhaps most intriguingly, a few meta-
critics have addressed the nature of media criticism as a
technological problem. Among the most innovative is Ong's
(1988) examination of the impact on communication and cog-
nitive structure of the replacement of orality--our first
communications technology--by writing. Ong also offers
predictions about the implications of the superseding of
the written technology by the electronic. To Ong, our com-
munications technologies define who we are, how we think
and the cultures and institutions we create. The
shift from one technology to another therefore means no
less than a redefinition of humanity.

When we expand our meta-critical inquiry to an examination as fundamental as Ong's, we begin to work toward a conception of a more rigorous, formalized critique.

The foundations of each of the critical models mentioned earlier can be similarly challenged, and in the present work I shall attempt to do so for the purpose of synthesizing a new model. Implicit in that attempt is the acknowledgement of what I shall argue is the appropriate role for academic criticism. That role is meta-critique, a critical examination of critique focusing on how criticism should be done. Thus far in academe, criticism of news media performance has failed to find a niche between the professional training of journalists and the social science investigation of the process and effects of mass communication. That failure may be due in part to an overarching concern by administrators in the evolution of journalism schools as training grounds for news media that often provide them with financial support (see, e.g., Romaner, 1984). In such a context effective criticism may be constrained or ignored. But the relative independence of academe and its hallmark of vigorous scholarship by those familiar with the news business might still be the best locus for meta-criticism.

What, then, is a critical model itself to comprise? That is the central issue I shall address. The inquiry proceeds as follows:

Chapter 2 includes a brief summary of current models of criticism of mass news media recognized by Lemert (1989): social responsibility, critical/cultural, Marxist, and empiricist. The chapter also presents reader-oriented criticism and deconstruction as alternative approaches from literary criticism.

In Chapter 3 the proposed theoretical and methodological model is outlined, synthesized from the other approaches. I argue that the critique of mass news media is appropriately conducted by the audiences of those media, and that that audience possesses a discourse sufficiently expert to conduct that critique. I propose that the theoretical base for that critique lies in moral philosophy, and that the appropriate methodological base can be derived from deconstruction. I also argue for the centrality of a coherence model of truth as the standard for the synthesized critical model.

The intention in arriving at the resulting model is to recognize mass news media as Carey (1974) sees them--a particular symbolic form and highly particular organization of social experience. The model allows comparison with the mythic and religious forms that mass media replaced and the scientific, essayist and aesthetic forms with which mass media emerged. The model as proposed is also intended to allow us to address the role of individual agency in the communication process.

Chapter 4 comprises a meta-critical argument for locating the theoretical basis for the model in moral philosophy, with an examination of how other models approach the moral basis for critique.

Chapter 5 consists of a comparison of the correspondence and coherence models of truth and an attempt to determine which model the current critical models identify as the appropriate standard for evaluation.

Chapter 6 includes an examination of how the principal foci of the proposed model--the newsgatherer, the content and context of news, and the reader--are addressed by current models of news media criticism.

Chapter 7 comprises a review of how current models of literary criticism approach the moral basis for criticism, the nature of truth, the author, content and context, and the reader.

In Chapter 8 I attempt to illustrate how the proposed model can be used for critique by applying it to newspaper stories about the execution of Theodore Bundy in Florida's electric chair. The chapter also contains a discussion of what modifications to the model might be necessary based on an examination of how existing models of criticism would treat the same news stories about the Bundy execution. Chapter 8 also includes a brief discussion of the role of meta-critique in the proposed model. I conclude with an outline of a research program and directions for further inquiry based on the proposed model.

CHAPTER 2
SUMMARY OF EXISTING CRITICAL MODELS

Introduction

The models of mass news media criticism examined in Chapter 2 are those Lemert (1989) identifies as dominant in academics and the news profession, the principal institutions of criticism. The critical orientations are sometimes acknowledged or identified explicitly by their authors; in other cases, they must be revealed by examination. The discussion here also includes a summary of current models in literary criticism, and it briefly addresses the role of practitioners of the New Journalism in the development of news media criticism. The models from literary criticism are included to lay a groundwork for an examination of their possible usefulness as models for news media criticism, and, because literary criticism has achieved the status of a discipline to a degree that news media criticism has not, as a potential outline for a way to proceed in arriving at a formal critical model. Again, the goal of the present examination is to synthesize the existing models into a new model for the critique of mass news media.

Social Responsibility

Lemert (1989) identifies several characteristics of the social responsibility model as it has evolved: 1) News media should be held to a "higher" standard than profitability. 2) The marketplace has produced enormous problems for mass news media. 3) Audiences should not be the locus of criticism, because a shrinking of choices among media outlets has left audiences less able to judge them qualitatively. 4) For all those reasons, the news media must be their own best critics, and must accept the responsibility for making the "right" choices of fairness, accuracy and completeness to audiences. Methodologically, Lemert says, social responsibility-based criticism frequently focuses on specific events or situations as the unit of criticism, and on anecdotal evidence.

Perhaps the earliest news media critic to meet all of Lemert's criteria for the social responsibility model was Walter Lippmann. In 1920, Lippmann, a survivor of The War to End Wars, looked at where his nation had been and where it was going. He wasn't comfortable with what he saw in either direction.

What Lippmann identified as the crisis in western democracy he also saw as a crisis in journalism (Lippmann, 1920). Men had to deal with problems more difficult than any they had been prepared by schooling or experience to face. They recognized their need for information, but facts weren't available.

To Lippmann, the mass news media were to blame. In covering World War I, journalists had placed truth second in importance, behind their own conception of the national interest. To Lippmann, truth was the ultimate standard, and newspapers were failing utterly to meet it. Democracy is unworkable, Lippmann wrote, when those who control newspapers assume the right, guided by their consciences, to decide what will be reported, and for what purpose, Lippmann wrote. Personal courage to insist on the truth is laudable and necessary, but for newsmen, it is not enough.

The classic doctrine of liberty consists of absolutes, but liberty never exists in the world except as a condition under which other activity can take place. To Lippmann, a new conception was needed. News must be unfettered from the start. The price of liberty was the assumption of a daunting task: To protect the sources of news, to organize news so as to make it comprehensible, and to educate the human response. Truth was something to be found and preserved, by careful observation--which must precede every other activity--by tests of credibility, and by rigorous discipline in a reporter's use of words. Reporters, Lippmann wrote, must serve no cause, but must keep foregrounded that news exists to enable people to live successfully toward the future.

Two years later, Lippmann attempted to treat the impact of his prescriptions for news on the audience (Lippmann, 1922). The problem for the audience is the same

as for newsgatherers: to organize knowledge, to learn analysis, to discriminate between fact and fantasy, to transcend limited experience and limiting prejudice with those facts, to overcome apathy, to eschew the curious but trivial for the dull but important.

For Lippmann, there was no apprehension of different theories of truth. The correspondence model was assumed. Truth was categorical, definable, identifiable--and the ultimate standard. His teleology, while more difficult occasionally to operationalize, is similarly categorical: News exists to enable us to live successfully toward the future. Lippmann later was to acknowledge the "pseudo-environment" (1971) in which most individuals live, created of received facts about a world most of us can know only indirectly, a world of "pictures inside" provided by mass media, one that often misleads us in dealing with the world outside. But there is little apprehension in his work that the dichotomy has anything to do with the ultimate nature of truth.

There may be some support for the notion that Lippmann's work constitutes a rationale for locating criticism in a particular institution rather than a blueprint for a critical model. Still, Lippmann's writings provide some of the clearest illustrations of the possibility of extrapolating a model for a critique of media from a performance-based prescription for the mass news medium itself. His are also among the earliest efforts to define

the role of mass news media in terms of the social respon-
sibility theory of the press.

But social responsibility wasn't articulated as a
model until the 1947 Hutchins Commission report. The
report called on the press to meet five standards: To pro-
vide a truthful and meaningful account of the day's events;
to serve as a forum for comment and criticism; to represent
all constituent groups in society; to present and clarify
society's roles and values; and to provide full access to
the day's intelligence.

As a critical model, the report provided three
precedents for the model proposed herein. First, it ack-
nowledged the possibility of differing and sometimes con-
flicting models of truth:

> It is no longer enough to report the fact
> truthfully. It is now necessary to report
> the truth about the fact. (1947, p. 67)

Second, it used a moral standard as one axis for critique:

> . . .(T)he moral right of free public
> expression is not unconditional. . . .
> (W)hen the man who claims the moral right
> of free expression is a liar, a prostitute
> whose political judgments can be bought, a
> dishonest inflamer of hatred and suspicion,
> his claim is unwarranted and groundless.
> From the moral point of view, at least, free-
> dom of expression does not include the right
> to lie as a deliberate instrument of policy.
> (1947, p. 10)

Third, it acknowledged the role of culture and social sys-
tems in shaping judgments about the appropriateness of news
media messages and systems:

> It must be observed that freedom of the
> press is not a fixed and isolated value, the
> same in every society and in all times. . . .
> The freedom we have been examining has
> assumed a type of mentality which may seem
> to us a standard and universal but which is
> in many respects a product of our special
> history. . . . (1947, p. 12)

The report recommended vigorous self-criticism by the
press, and the creation of centers of research in academe.
But it did not specifically recommend a critique conducted
by either academics or the public.

The report also recommended a provision for sanc-
tions against transgressors in the press. It advocated es-
tablishment of a national press council as an independent
agency charged with reporting annually on the news media's
performance. The council would define workable standards
of performance, indicate inadequacies in press performance,
identify the exclusion of minority viewpoints from access
to the press, analyze the way other cultures are presented
by the press in the United States, appraise trends and
characteristics of the mass media, report on governmental
regulation of the media, investigate press lying, and en-
courage centers of research and criticism of the mass
media.

By the following year, there was evidence that at
least some of the commission's recommendations were being
taken to heart, but in decidedly institutional fashion.
Writing in <u>Journalism Quarterly</u>, Lazarsfeld (1948) proposed
several research questions for academics: How much

criticism of the press is there? Where is it directed?
How much is documented in a way that makes us believe it is
justified? Lazarsfeld pointed out that mass media were
frequently hostile to criticism. (Indeed, there had been
widespread grumbling about the Hutchins Commission from
newspapermen because none of its members were from the
press. See Lowenstein & Merrill, 1990.) Journalism
schools were reluctant to do criticism, Lazarsfeld argued,
because it was not recognized as a legitimate field of in-
quiry. Instead, it was frequently marked by ax-grinding,
which set it beyond the pale when compared with the treat-
ment of criticism in disciplines such as literature and
art. (But one also suspects that Lazarsfeld himself might
have had something to do with the supposed illegitimacy of
press criticism. As a pioneer in empirical research,
Lazarsfeld had much to do with shifting the emphasis of
journalism schools to research, frequently funded by mass
media. That may have been merely an extension of the
rapidly evolving tradition of journalism schools as profes-
sional training centers for journalists, sometimes un-
derwritten by those media. (See, e.g., Gitlin, 1981.
Similarly, Allen, 1987, says that the conception from the
outset of broadcasting as an advertising medium rather than
as an art form led to funded research that examined the re-
lationship between mass media and their audiences as
sociological and commercial in nature rather than as
aesthetic.)

Among the topics Lazarsfeld thought appropriate to investigate: crusades, intellectuals and liberals, the audience, mass media's criticism of each other, and the mass media-social system relation. One of the principal tools for tackling all those topics was documentation of the content of news media.

Lazarsfeld's early meta-criticism illustrates the predominance of the content- and producer-focus of social-responsibility-based criticism. Jensen's later (1960) argument for an academic-located critique is less oriented to producer and product, but those foci still predominate. Jensen argues that mass media criticism should be the central concern of journalism schools. His criteria for evaluating mass media, while still decidedly adhering to a social responsibility model, predict the nascent critical and cultural studies models that were already evolving. Jensen's criteria are objectivity, a regard for the influence of political, social and cultural forces in the historic development of mass media, and the contextual relationships of mass media with their environment. By the time of Jensen's writing, three other characteristics of the social responsibility model had emerged: It posited the working journalist as the appropriate critic; it was will-based--that is, critique should be the product of responsible journalists willing their actions based on a universalizable principle of public good; and it was teleological, or goal-based.

Criticism based on the social responsibility model certainly is not rare in the academic literature. After Lazarsfeld and Jensen, academic criticism did gain some currency. But the model has been embraced even more enthusiastically by the mass news media themselves, and their audiences. The manifestations are in the types of criticism we see in those locations--ombudsmen, codes of ethics, journalism reviews, and press councils.

Critical Theory/Cultural Studies

The critical theory and cultural studies approaches to criticism both tend to endorse the Marxist and post-Marxist notion of the necessity of examining the role of mass news media in perpetuating a false consciousness (Lemert, 1989), although that endorsement is by no means universal. Frequently, the endorsement carries a con-comitant assumption that the influence of mass media on audiences is pervasive and profound, prompting Blumler's (1983) observation that critical theorists assume what they cannot demonstrate. Because of their assertion that the news media's influence is powerful, Lemert says, critical and cultural theorists think criticism should focus on media content, the producers of that content and the decision-makers directing them, and the rationales for the decisions they make. Unlike Marxist critics, Lemert says, critical/cultural critics tend not to consider the inter-play of other institutions in influencing the audience. An example of the producer-focus of the critical theory model

is the work of Paletz and Entman (1981), who contend that the major function and effect of the news media is the maintenance of systems--their own newsgathering apparatus and the dominant political and ideological systems. Tuchman (1978) likewise focuses on the news media, suggesting that they operate as part of the established order and that norms and routinization among news organizations contribute to the meaning of news. Epstein (1973) turns his attention to the impact of such routinization, positing news as a condensation of reality that is narrative, conflictual, highly stereotyped and simplified. News imposes easily recognizable, familiar forms on disparate events.

Allen (1987b) argues that some cultural studies models focus instead on the audience. One of the most successful has been the orientation that has come to be known as British cultural studies. British cultural studies, says Allen, places its emphasis on how viewers of television make use of the medium in their own lives.

Grossberg (1987) offers a somewhat more theoretical analysis of the critical approach. Critical research, he says, is often defined by three criteria: its recognition of the close and often necessary relationship between knowledge and politics; its understanding of the complex causal relationship between communication and "the social totality" (1987, p. 88), and its view of communication as the expression of existing power relations.

To Grossberg, critical work is characterized by open-ended theoretical practice using the concepts of difference, struggle and empowerment. The concept of difference recognizes that the outcomes of particular historical events and processes are never guaranteed. In other words, history is contingent and not necessary. The study of struggle is usually characterized by an analysis of how particular processes or texts are inserted into and articulated within complex contexts. The struggle involves the attempt to produce contexts within which any practice is determined and its effects actualized. Borrowing from contemporary literary theory, Grossberg locates critical work in the dialectic between deconstruction of those texts and processes--which aims to unravel the underlying relationships of text and context--and reconstruction, which is a process by which the audience creates meaning. The analysis of struggle is the basis for Gramsci's construct of hegemony (cited in Bennett, Martin, Mercer & Woollacott, 1981), and Hall's (1973, 1977) typology of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings of texts.

Elsewhere, Grossberg (1979) argues that critical theory recognizes a crisis in culture brought about by modernization, marked variously by the loss of individuality, a lack of shared values, norms, meanings and a sense of community, a lost sense of roots, and the domination of culture by particular symbolic structures. To Grossberg, there is a close connection between how the critical

theorist conceives of communication and his image of the crisis of culture. As a result, the critical theorist finds consideration of the ethical and moral dimensions of theories fundamental.

Like Lemert, Grossberg acknowledges an important difference between critical/cultural critics and Marxists. That is Habermas' (1979) notion of displacing the locus of investigation of the cultural crisis from the classic Marxist realms of economics and politics to the individual domain of social interaction. An even more fundamental difference is what Landmann (see Tar, 1977) calls critical theory's "abandonment of the Marxist method for the sake of metaphysical speculation" (p. 203). Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the founders and crucial influences of the Frankfurt School, came to reject the basic tenets of Marxism: unity of theory, empirical research and revolu-tionary praxis (Tar, 1977). For Horkheimer and Adorno, the flaw in empirical sociology is in its acceptance of social facts as analogous to the so-called neutral facts of the natural sciences. Instead, says Landmann, the Frankfurt School distinguished between two types of reason. One is enlightening and emancipating. The other is instrumental, which merely reinforces existing conditions and serves the dominant social structure.

Gitlin (1987) accomplishes much the same perspective in examining television. To Gitlin, television illustrates

the driving force--or more correctly, the pervasive
inertia--of late capitalist society: hegemony.

Gitlin has more patience with popular culture than
many critical theorists. In advanced capitalist societies,
he says, popular culture is the meeting ground for two
linked social processes. The so-called culture industry
packages products for markets, reflecting the dominant
values and mode of discourse of the society. Consumption
of popular culture helps the different social groups define
their status and identify and position themselves in a
society. One example of the result, presumably, is the so-
called crisis of rising expectations in emerging societies
and among emerging sub-cultures and minorities within a
society.

Gitlin sees popular culture products as artifacts,
produced by professionals employed and supervised by elites
with cultural and/or state interests. Gramsci's notion of
hegemony is introduced here. Gitlin defines hegemony
(noted also by Williams, 1973, 1977, and Hall, 1973, 1977),
as "a process by which an alliance of class factions domi-
nates subordinate classes and groups through the elabora-
tion and penetration of ideology into their common sense
and everyday practice" (1987, p. 241).

The professionals who produce popular culture are
symbolic adepts who make their livings from the elites.
Thus an alliance forms between political and economic
powers and the cultural elites. It is subject to

continuous negotiation, renegotiation and shifting so that
the hegemonous society can absorb, defuse and dissipate
radical dissent.

It is also collaborative, a condition of the social
system instead of the project of a ruling group.

> Hegemony is the suffusing of the society by
> ideology that sustains the powerful groups'
> claims to their power by rendering their
> preeminence natural, justifiable and benefi-
> cent. . . . Absolute power coerces; hegemony
> persuades, coaxes, rewards, chastises.
> (1987, p. 241)

Given Gitlin's model, it is easy to imagine a critique
of both individual television programs and of television as
a system in which plots, dialogue and symbols reinforce the
dominant culture. Dissent is co-opted, and programming be-
comes a bland pudding, the product of an intent to deliver
to advertisers a mass and inert audience. Gitlin offers
examples of both types of critiques.

He also introduces (1980) the concept of media
frames--patterns of cognitions, interpretation and
presentation by which symbol-handlers organize discourse.
In the context of media frames, for example, political
movements can become newsworthy only by submitting to the
implicit rules of newsmaking and by conforming to journal-
istic notions.

For Cockburn (1986), the critique of news media in a
critical/cultural framework becomes important as the
preservation of criticality and dissent in a hegemonous
society. For Carey (1983), the operation of hegemony in a

culture underscores the necessity for the critical/cultural
insistence on placing the critique of mass media within the
mass culture debate. Indeed, he defines the task of cul-
tural studies as the attempt to think through a theory or
vocabulary of communications that is simultaneously a
theory or vocabulary of culture. Included in that concep-
tion is the notion of communication as a ritual process
through which shared culture is created. To Carey (1979),
that view is truncated by the study and critique of mass
communication as that study and critique have evolved in
the United States. What has been overlooked, says Carey,
is any notion of communication as a set of practices, con-
ventions and forms assumed to exist but never investigated.

    The critical/cultural perspective certainly is not
missing entirely from the practice of journalism in the
United States. For nearly three decades it has been ack-
nowledged and incorporated into the work of the so-called
New Journalists. Much of New Journalism can be seen as an
attempt to deal with the questions raised by criti-
cal/cultural theorists. But New Journalism's roots lie
not in Marxist ideology but in questions about the nature
of journalistic truth, doubts about the unassailability of
journalistic facts, and the recognition of human beings'
greater reliance on the affective and internal world than
on the rational, observed, external one. Wolfe acknow-
ledges the impact of the last:

> The idea was to give the full objective des-
> cription, plus something that readers had al-
> ways had to go to novels and short stories
> for: namely, the subjective or emotional life
> of the characters. . . . The most important
> things one attempted in terms of technique
> depended upon a depth of information that had
> never been demanded in newspaper work.
> (1973, p. 21)

Romano (1986) credits New Journalists with recognizing
that word choice creates facts, a notion that conventional
journalists often do not acknowledge. Hellman (1981) char-
acterizes conventional and New Journalism as "the disguised
perspective versus an admitted one, and a corporate fiction
versus a personal one" (p. 4).

Marxism

The Marxist critical model is rooted in the concept
of false consciousness (Lemert, 1989). That concept claims
its philosophical legitimacy in Marx's rejection of history
as a matter of metaphysical necessity (Habermas, 1979).
Instead, history is contingent, dependent on both condi-
tions of change and the operation of social agents
(D'Amico, 1981).

The mass news media become one of a network of in-
stitutional mechanisms that create and perpetuate a con-
sciousness among subordinate groups and classes that
deceives them into cooperating with social and economic ar-
rangements that work to their detriment and to enrich the
ruling elite. The Marxist critique sees journalists as
both victims and perpetrators of the false consciousness.
Journalists' craft attitudes become a type of false

consciousness whereby journalists believe they serve the
public by embracing concepts such as objectivity. In
reality, the Marxist critique argues, such concepts serve
only to facilitate deception of the masses, thereby rein-
forcing the false consciousness that props up and enriches
the ruling class. Mass media become a mechanism to fulfill
what Marx saw as one of the characteristics of a society--
its attempts to present its form of social life as a natu-
ral necessity (D'Amico, 1981).

False consciousness, accepted and constantly nur-
tured by mass media, serves the ruling elite by legitimiz-
ing capitalism. The mass media become crucial in con-
tributing to the constant expansion and creation of markets
that capitalism requires. People are made to recognize
themselves as consumers, buying into a value system and
political structure that makes acquisition necessary and
desirable (Mosco & Herman, 1981). At the same time, the
predominant social responsibility model adhered to by mass
media deceives people into believing that their participa-
tion in a so-called democratic process really matters. A
good citizen is an informed citizen, and informed citizens
can participate responsibly in political decision-making
and so determine the course of their own lives.

In reality, the Marxist argument maintains, there is
little difference among political elites, and so the people
have no real choice among systems. The more information
they seek in trying to fulfill the goal of responsible

citizenship, which has been established for them by elites, the more they will be inoculated by the false consciousness those elites depend on and that the mass media purvey.

It should be noted that Marxist critical theory is in large part the result of a process of derivation and interpretation. Jouet (1981) observes that the underdevelopment of mass media in Marx's time may have been partly responsible for Marx's own silence about their role. On a broader scale, D'Amico (1981) points out that there is little in Marx's writings that specifically addresses the nature of culture. What there is is vague and open to broad interpretation. However, within what Marx wrote on the economic structure lies the beginnings of a theory of cultural forms or modes of expression. Those beginnings were investigated in more detail beginning with the inception of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s. The Frankfurt School began to experiment with interpreting Marxism as a theory of political sociology instead of political economy. Often acknowledged as the birthplace of critical theory in mass communication, the Frankfurt School originally used the term as a code name for Marxism (Arato & Gebhardt, 1978). But, as outlined in the previous section, Adorno and Horkheimer eventually split from Marxism and rejected its tenets (see Tar, 1977).

The application of Marxist theory to the development of society and culture was extended by Levi-Strauss (1979), who argues for the centrality of the role of symbolic

structures in social control and cohesion. Levi-Strauss introduces the idea of exchange--in a Marxian but not in a strictly economic sense--as the expression of society as a symbolic system. The aim of a social theory, he says, is to reduce diverse appearances of social life to universal structures for all cultures. Universal structures, though unconscious, determine the details of cultural forms, and are investigated as the collective manifestation of meaning. That notion becomes fundamental also to much of contemporary theory of literary criticism.

In a Marxian view of culture, then, a commodity is seen not simply as an object but as a complex and mediated social relation (D'Amico, 1981). The analysis of the commodity must precede an investigation of its meaning. The commodity becomes a social hieroglyphic, and the point of critique for Marx is the dynamic of concealment--the process whereby false consciousness is created--in the social hieroglyphic.

To Horkheimer (1978), the rise of industrialization, the modern city and mass culture forced the integration of individuals into more complex, mechanical and reified networks of relations, until finally the individual was left without a self to preserve. Hence the notion of the necessity of critique as a challenge to the discourse of power that presumably preserves individuality.

More recently, Marxist theory has been brought to bear on the technology of communications, and such

post-Marxist constructions are frequently recognizable as the groundwork for much of critical theory. To Giddens (1975), the acquisition and concentration of power by ruling elites no longer results only from control of the means of production. Late capitalist power likewise derives from the long-distance control of information. Mosco and Herman (1981) likewise acknowledge the growing significance of information resources in understanding the shape and direction of contemporary capitalism. In a hegemonous culture, information resources become an arena for the class struggle.

The same shift is recognized by Schiller (1983a, 1983b, 1983c), but he finds it underlain by the transformation of capitalism's base from industry to service. In such a system, information becomes a private, commercial commodity rather than a potential social good (1983a, 1983c). The information delivery system is designed and exists to maintain economic privilege and prevent the social change that would eliminate privilege (1983a), prompting Schiller's assertion that production should be the focus of the critique of mass communication. For Schiller, mass communication researchers study a world that doesn't matter while ignoring the one that does (1983b).

Habermas' (1979) reinterpretation of Marx is decidedly more romantic. Unlike Schiller's, it focuses on the individual perspective of communication. For Habermas, the way to understand even mass communication is first at

the individual level, as a language-centered, audience-dependent discourse grounded in reflective reason, a developmental logic of communicative and moral competence.

Empiricism

Lemert (1981, 1989) argues that, in addition to its customary apprehension as a theoretical philosophy for a particular scientific methodology, empiricism is an appropriate model for the critique of news media, a cure for the paucity of rigorous critical analysis. Underlying that notion is his belief that, while not all individual and social phenomena can be studied empirically, empirical methodologies are probably the best way to study those that submit themselves to empirical study at all. McLeod and Blumler (1987) summarize the classic requirements of empirical inquiry: measurement, sensitivity to the existence of relationships, control of variables, comparison of variables, and abstraction of results from observation and other methods of data gathering.

What empiricism offers is meta-critical clarity--a definitive way to proceed, at least as regards the collection of evidence for the critique and the systematization of the analysis of that evidence. The scientific methodology can be used to form research questions and hypotheses, gather data and interpret results. Empiricism also avoids the overt polemics that frequently pervade critical, cultural and Marxist inquiry (although critical theorists and Marxist critics frequently argue that the empirical

approach itself is polemic. See, e.g., Grossberg, 1987).
Empiricism also provides closure, the possibility of
bounded inquiry that holistic approaches often lack (McLeod
& Blumler, 1987). Lowery and DeFleur (1983) and Weaver and
Gray (1980) point out that because early researchers in
mass communication came from, and frequently returned to,
other disciplines, the study of mass communication was un-
systematic. Researchers seldom built on or even trusted
each other's research. Research was often done because the
money for it was available, not because of a theory base.
Presumably, the use of empiricism as a critical methodol-
ogy, with its insistence on searching for a theory against
which to test data, can serve to force us to focus on es-
tablishing the theory base that mass media criticism so
often lacks. As Stevenson (1983) argues, data without
theory are sterile, but theory without data is merely
polemic.

What empiricism lacks is a teleological groundwork,
the standard by which the evidence gathered is to be ana-
lyzed and judged. In that sense, it can be argued that
empiricism remains a research strategy rather than a criti-
cal model.

For teleology, it often borrows from other models.
McLeod and Blumler (1987) and de Sola Pool (1983), for ex-
ample, argue for using empirical methods to address the
macrosocial issues most often addressed by critical and
cultural researchers. Indeed, as Lang and Lang (1983) and

Lemert (1989) point out, one flaw in the attack on
empiricism by critical theorists is that much empirical
work is critical in nature (see, e.g., Tuchman, 1972,
1978). Smythe and Van Dinh (1983) observe that the basis
for distinction between empirical and critical research is
frequently seen in the research problems chosen and methods
used. They suggest consideration of the researcher's
ideological orientation as well.

Blumler (1983) proposes empirical inquiry as one ap-
proach to determining the role of mass media in a social
responsibility model. Specifically, he says, empirical
methodologies can reveal how mass media promote or block
the realization of democratic values.

Lazarsfeld (1948) saw the value of empirical inquiry
for critique in analyzing how much criticism is being done,
where it is directed, and whether it is documented in a way
that leaves us convinced that the critique is justified.
He also saw it as an antidote to the non-formal, post-facto
ax-grinding that continues to characterize criticism of
mass news media.

Stevenson (1983) avers that critical analysis can
and should meet the test of empirical verification, but
that the emphasis of empiricism should shift to society in-
stead of the individual as the unit of analysis. That
shift would solve a frequent problem of both empirical and
critical inquiry, the so-called ecological fallacy--the
tendency of researchers to measure or observe at one level

but to make inferences at another, usually higher level.
Weaver and Gray (1980) offer suggestions for empirically
based research programs for critics of the news media.
Suggested topics include the impact of the social-
intellectual climate on journalistic values, attitudes and
performance; the impact of new technologies on journalism
and society; trends, issues and directions in mass media
criticism, and media economics, including the role of mass
media in capitalist societies.

Literary Criticism

Contemporary theory in literary criticism assumes, as
Allen says, "that we experience the world through systems
of representation that, at the very least, condition our
knowledge of the world and, some would argue, construct
that world" (1987, p. 5). Contemporary criticism for the
most part has evolved in reaction to one critical model--
the New Criticism. New Criticism posits the work itself as
the appropriate subject for criticism. That notion arose
in turn from formalism, a turn-of-the-century model. For-
malism was the result of attempts to establish literary
criticism as a formal discipline, in reaction to the
strictly moral/ethical critical criteria of the previous
century. One way the "modern" critical approach of formal-
ism attempted to establish itself as a discipline was by
providing an identifiable methodology for critique (Wil-
lingham, 1989).

New Criticism, then, was not the first attempt to
formalize an approach to literary criticism, but it was
able to articulate its central tenets formally: It asserts
the autonomy of the artifact, it emphasizes the preeminence
of form and style over the relationship of the work to life
(Willingham, 1989), and it defines the difference between
poetry and science by acknowledging that, besides simply
containing the poetic stuff, form organizes and shapes it
and defines its meaning (Brooks & Warren, 1976).

Allen contrasts formalism and the New Criticism--
both spoken of now as traditional critical approaches--with
contemporary criticism:

> . . . (T)raditional criticism conceives of
> its object of study as a unified "work"; con-
> temporary criticism takes as its object of
> study the "text": the site of intersection
> for a complex web of codes and conventions
> . . . . Traditional criticism emphasizes the
> autonomy of the artwork; contemporary criti-
> cism foregrounds the relationships between
> texts and the conventions underlying specific
> textual practices. . . . Traditional criti-
> cism conceives of meaning as a property of an
> artwork; contemporary criticism views meaning
> as the product of the engagement of a text by
> a reader or group of readers. (1987, p. 7)

Said (1977) illustrates the nature of the reaction
to the New Criticism when he refers to the arrogance of
isolating the text. But Atkins (1989) identifies the sub-
stance of much of the reaction against the New Criticism as
the rejection of manifest content as the proper subject of
critique. To Atkins, theory exists only as a form of prac-
tice. Meaning is defined as a process of creation rather

than discovery from a manifest artifact. The job of the critic is to provide resistances to theory, so that theory itself becomes a process of allowing theories to see their own stance as interested, positional and strategic instead of objective, natural or true. In that sense, theory prevents particular theories from evading the question of their own framing.

With resistance to theory the critical marching order, the development of structuralism may have been inevitable. Borrowing methodologically from the emerging discipline of semiotics—the study of signs and how they are given meaning—structuralism scrutinizes what seems self-evident (Lefkovitz, 1989). Semiotics ceases to define art as mimesis, or the representation of reality, and sees it instead as semeosis, the process of recovering from the text the secondary, deeper level of signification.

Because reality is mediated by signs, the task of the structuralist critic is to use textual knowledge to identify the codes a writer invokes. Communities that share textual histories reach consensus about meaning because they share the codes and conventions of expression. Meaning becomes intertextual; texts refer to other texts. (The obvious example in mass media is the television guide published by most daily newspapers. The text is almost exclusively a product of its references to other texts—television programs watched by nearly all the newspaper's readers.)

Semiotics finds meaning only relationally, and so it restores literature to its contexts. An early tenet of semiotics, championed by Saussure (cited in Lefkovitz, 1989), was that meaning is located where difference is perceived between signs. For example, we understand the separate meanings of "dog" and "bog" only because of the difference between the letters "d" and "b." Communication, then, becomes a meaning-event constituted by signs and the process of interpreting them.

On a larger, cultural scale, structuralism sees literature in part as an attempt to resolve differences. That is the function of mythmaking--a survival strategy in which a story mediates between irreconcilable oppositions. (To be sure, structuralism is not universally embraced. For example, see Girard, 1977, for an attack on the doctrine of linguistic difference.)

For many so-called postmodern critics, there remains another step for criticism--defamiliarization (Barthes, 1987). In such a theoretical and methodological construct the critic becomes the exposer of literary conventions that have come to look like truth. Hence Eco's (1976) definition of a sign system as anything that can be used to lie. The purpose of defamiliarization is to reveal how texts work as cultural artifacts that participate in and express the values of the system out of which they emerge (Lefkovitz, 1989). Once texts are identified as collections of literary conventions, truth can be seen to change according

to the rules of discourse. Texts become effective in part
according to their ability to make the "truths" of a cul-
ture seem universal, and the task of a culture is to try to
re-create its beginnings to conform with changing values.
To Fish (1980), we read and interpret as communities, and
the community establishes the criteria for appropriate
readings through the rhetoric of persuasion.

For the structuralist, says Lefkovitz, the job of
criticism becomes demystification, a search "not for uni-
versal beauty and truth but to tell us how we've come to
see something as beautiful or true and whose interest this
aesthetic has served" (1989, p. 71). The central role of
ideology becomes apparent.

For still other literary theorists, preserving the
integrity of that search means developing a new critical
methodology, and so deconstruction evolved. Because of its
theoretical base in the elevation of the importance of the
process of meaning creation, deconstruction must be seen
principally as methodology. It is hardly surprising, then,
that deconstruction is most often described rather than
defined. Its proponents talk about what it does rather
than what it is. To Johnson (1981), the deconstructive
critique exposes what the starting point of a theory con-
ceals, and therefore it displaces all ideas that follow
from that theory. Derrida (1978) describes deconstruction
as attempting to displace the domination of one mode of
signifying over another. For Anderson (1989),

deconstruction examines and exposes the force of power and authority in the text as a desire for mastery and an attempt to smother difference. It also exposes the attempt to master knowledge through language and meaning through interpretation. Deconstruction attempts to reveal what is at stake when power and authority repress difference to create the illusion of masterable knowledge and meaning. The deconstructive model itself becomes an acknowledgement that power and authority are more at issue than knowledge and truth.

To Derrida (1978), the ideological insistence on meaning as positively present in language is a product of logocentrism, the concept of the reflective self that resulted from, or was enabled by, the rise of the literate technology (see Ong, 1988).

Derrida proposes that discourse can be examined partly as the relationship among technology, ideology and the practices of institutions--that is, how institutions use technology to carry out the ideology of a social system. A shift in the technology of discourse inevitably means change, but the direction of the change is not inevitable.

Ong (1988) summarizes the impact of the shift from orality to literacy--the alphabetic, written technology of discourse that began with Socrates and lasted through Freud. The literate technology enabled the invention of

method and was a necessary condition of the development of
theology, science, history, and criticism.

The alphabetic apparatus was reflected in post-
Socratic ideology--the notion of the unified, autonomous,
rational human subject, the individual, the logocentric hu-
man being. Indeed, the concept of the human self, the rise
of humanism, awaited the logocentrism that the technology
of literacy bred.

Literary criticism analyzed written discourse in
terms of the objective distance between writer and reader,
necessarily employing the empiricism that was born of
logocentrics and method.

(The evolution of the public sphere that we now
recognize and assume likewise awaited the evolution of the
notion of self. The role of mass news media in such a so-
cial system is obvious. Mass communication of information
is essential to the enlightenment model of public organiza-
tion. Thus critique--not of themselves, but of the
society--becomes part of the job of news media. The criti-
que is conducted by both news gatherers and audiences, and
its focus encompasses oppression, injustice, and ineffi-
cient systems within a society. Critique becomes an essen-
tial element of the society.)

The obvious question for the deconstructive critic
now becomes the impact of the next shift in technology, to
an electronic apparatus. The electronic technology em-
braces both earlier technologies--orality and literacy. It

is, therefore, simultaneously linear/rational and affective. Such a recognition begs for new critical models for the mass media, those that embrace the context of the message, including what is left out, and its impact. An example is the coverage of political campaigns. Richard Wirthlin (cited in Linsky, 1983), who directed Ronald Reagan's 1980 television campaign, boasted that the campaign was able to use television to create its themes and convey them to the electorate at the same time that Reagan's handlers carefully limited the news media's access to their candidate. Wirthlin's strategy for handling the media included creating the campaign's themes, getting those themes before the electorate in controllable formats and environments, and minimizing opportunities for the news media to bring up events and issues that didn't fit the campaign's themes. Will (1990) cites one result of such strategies for modern political coverage: The length of the average television "sound bite" for candidates in news coverage of the 1988 presidential campaign was 9.8 seconds.

Ong's technological shift would recognize the television sound bite as a more affective manifestation of the same process that has become so ingrained in newspapers that it is seldom acknowledged: the packaging, compartmentalization and formatting of news to meet institutional and organizational needs. The narrowing of attention spans, the fostering of the short answer and quick fix that are supposedly characteristic of the sound bite is a

fundamental change, but not in political reporting. The change lies in the transference of a long tradition to a new technology, and the impact of that shift on the reader/audience. Depending on the medium in which it is conveyed, the packaging of the sound bite--or its print equivalent-- might work to create a particular conscious- ness in an audience. The point is that because we have be- come so accustomed to seeing that form of packaging in newspapers, we tend not to see it. Criticism of the tele- vision sound bite has failed to acknowledge the same phenomenon in newspapers. A critical model that fails to reveal the impact of processes on artifacts fails. A critique that acknowledges that impact would not only place the process in context, but it would remind us of the evolutionary rather than inevitable nature of news. News is the product of conscious decisions, at first deliberate and then defined by the predominant methodology of news- gathering, the demands of production, the task-oriented sociology of the newsroom, and the exigencies of economics.

The poststructuralist critical approach apprehends the potential impact of the latest technological shift on our culture, including its impact on the nature of the mass media messages we receive. In a real sense, a post- structuralist theory of criticism becomes a posthumanist approach to ideology and the practices of institutions, be- cause the notion of the individual is also subject to radi- cal revision in an electronic technology. Indeed, Foucault

(1970) ventures that the age of man may be nearing its end, because the human subject as we know it is not and was never inevitable. It was contingent, the product of sig-nifying systems.

If the electronic culture returns us to the im-mediacy and affective nature of the oral technology, the focus of meta-criticism might shift from considerations of theoretical bases and methodologies to the actors involved, and thus to the appropriate location for critique. The audience-oriented critical model addresses that shift.

The audience-oriented model's central premise is that the reader of a text is a perceiving subject rather than that the text is an autonomous object (Rabinowitz, 1989). Theoretically, then, it shares fundamental notions with structuralism and poststructuralism. It also ad-dresses who the reader is, the locus of meaning and the authority for interpretation, and the nature of the act of reading. To Iser (1978) and Allen (1987), the reader's place is marked by gaps in the text, either implicit or ex-plicit, so communication begins when the reader bridges those gaps. That construct, obviously, closely parallels the structuralist notion of reading as a process of meaning construction.

What remain unresolved are the questions for the meta-critique attempted herein: the extent to which models

from literary criticism can be applied to the critique of news media; and how an effective critical model that posits the reader as critic can be synthesized. That model will be proposed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
THE MODEL

Introduction

The review in the previous chapter of existing
models of mass media and literary criticism provides a
groundwork for the model to be synthesized from them and
presented in this chapter. It also proposes questions
customarily addressed by a critical model.

Those questions include: What are the appropriate
theoretical and methodological bases for the model? What
is the appropriate subject or subjects for critique?
Should critique be limited to manifest content, or should
it include analysis of the newsgathering process and the
audience's act of reading the news? There is a related
question: What are the boundaries of the critical inquiry?
Where is the critique appropriately located--in other
words, who should the critics be? Finally, what is the
goal of the process of critique?

Those questions have already suggested some answers.
Self-critique by news media has essentially failed. Aca-
demic criticism may be irretrievably lost from departments
of journalism because they were established principally as
training schools for the news media outlets that frequently
fund them (Romaner, 1984). As such, they are limited in

their freedom to conduct critique. There is another ele-
ment missing from academe: Academics are trained in in-
quiry, of course, since it is their primary task. What is
missing is the possibility of sanction. When the news
media ignore the critique of academics, academics have no
sanction. The role of academe is meta-critique.

One locus does have the power that should underlie
prescription--that is, the sanction to induce change. That
locus is the audience. With the reader as critic the sanc-
tion is obvious: If the reader finds the news lacking, the
reader has the power of abandoning it.

The chief problem of reader-conducted critique is
familiar--the reader's apparent lack of expertise, its in-
clination to indulge in ax-grinding. The model to be pro-
posed here will address that problem by showing it as an
attempt by the audience to use an unfamiliar discourse.
The answer lies in trusting the expertise that audiences do
possess: common sense.

Several reasons can be cited to support a reader-
conducted critique. The first has to do with the multi-
plicity and diversity of the mass news media. As
Lowenstein and Merrill (1990) point out, one medium cannot
easily be isolated from another. It is likewise difficult
to establish an overarching producer-oriented critique when
the intent of producers varies so widely.

Lowenstein and Merrill also identify several charac-
teristics of messages and the audiences who receive them:

Mass media messages cannot be isolated from the personality of the receiver; messages cannot be isolated from the physical conditions surrounding the receiver; it is difficult to find representative control groups in assessing the impact/effects of mass media on a large scale; it is difficult to determine whether the message is cause or effect.

In their shortcomings, the existing models suggest a blueprint for constructing a new critical model. In its individual components, and in the way those components work together, the proposed model attempts to resolve the problems identified in the existing models.

The Model

The principal characteristics of the proposed model are these: 1) It provides a theoretical framework and rationale from moral philosophy; 2) Its methodology is inspired by deconstruction, an apparatus from literary criticism that attempts to reveal the ideological assumptions inherent in a work, the conventions used to convey those assumptions as truth, and the interrelationships among the news producer, the story, the reader and the culture that surrounds them; 3) It names the reader as the appropriate critic, and posits the reader's own common-sense discourse as appropriate for conducting the critique; 4) It acknowledges the legitimacy of the process that readers, to varying degrees, already engage in; 5) It acknowledges the coherence model of truth as dominant in news stories and

appropriate to the critique of them; 6) Because it is reader-conducted, it allows the possibility of sanction; 7) It eliminates the debate over the nature of evidence required to support the critique; 8) It posits reading as a process of creation of meaning that occurs where producer, work, reader and cultural context intersect; 9) It rejects meaning as positively present in the work itself; 10) It defines "text" as the site of intersection for a network of codes and conventions; 11) It recognizes critique as a fundamental part of and inseparable from reading; 12) In its theoretical and methodological bases, it emphasizes the interrelationship among news media and the culture that surrounds and suffuses them, so that we approach critique as a process of understanding those interrelationships rather than assuming that the news product is distinct from and independent of them; 13) It approaches news media as systems shaped by their goals and internal and external constraints, which interact with other systems in an ongoing process of creation of culture; 14) It offers sufficient flexibility to be applied to all news media and to apprehend the impact of a shift in the dominant technology.

The model's components are these: 1) A theoretical rationale that proposes morality as a process of creating value, and critique as a moral process; 2) A teleology that posits the goal of critique as enabling us to use the critique to help locate ourselves appropriately in the world that surrounds us and in relation to other human

beings; 3) A three-part methodology--reading, which focuses
on the word as the first unit of analysis, and the jux-
taposition of words in context as the secondary unit of
analysis; recognition, which identifies what has been ex-
cluded or rejected at both levels of analysis, and ack-
nowledges the coherence rather than the correspondence
model of truth as appropriate; and reconstruction, which
creates a meaning that allows either rejection or assimila-
tion of the work in the context of the teleology.

<div align="center">Theoretical base</div>

The proposed model's theoretical base is in a tradi-
tion of moral philosophy that has survived--albeit often
ignored or misinterpreted--for two millennia. For Plato
(see Hamilton & Cairns, 1961), reason did not exist except
as the means by which we locate ourselves in the world
around us. It allows us to coordinate our activities so
that we achieve proportion within ourselves, and it guides
us to an ideal interrelationship with the world of which we
are a part. The key to achieving that harmony was
activity--doing the things that, in the appropriate degree
and proportion--will make us fulfilled.

The tradition is echoed in Kant (1785/1969,
1787/1965). As Auxter (1982) argues, interpretations of
Kant as deontologist miss the fundamental point of his
philosophy. Duty was not the end in itself for which Kant
argued; human beings were. Again, the model is based on
seeking balance with others in the world.

To see Mill (see Smith & Sosa, 1969) strictly as a pragmatic philosopher, as a radical break in the tradition of moral philosophy, is to ignore the historical context of the industrial revolution and its attendant political and social system, whose excesses Mill was attempting to address within rather than outside the tradition of moral philosophy. Instead, Mill attempted to apply the traditions of moral philosophy to an increasingly complex society and system of social organization. In that sense, Auxter argues elsewhere (1986), Mill and utilitarianism are likewise faithful to the tradition of moral philosophy.

What emerges from the classical tradition, then, is the notion of morality as a process of creating value, of a constant attempt to balance choices and widen the scope of morality. The Greeks preached development of character and abilities through appropriate activity. Kant urged the development of respect for humans as ends in themselves. Mill attempted to extend the moral process to a fundamentally changed society.

The alternative conception--that morality should be understood as a choice between conflicting systems--results in the kind of a compartmentalization of morality that leaves us with the notion that morality is irrelevant to systematic inquiry. Our increasing specialization leaves us to assume what Kant feared--an understanding model rather than a knowledge model. Instead of having morality

to guide us in a process of placing events and phenomena in a larger world context, we seek only to understand--to stand in relation to a particular event or observation. The fundamental moral distinction is lost: We ignore the difference between human beings and objects.

Indeed, as Auxter argues, our values themselves have been specialized. We recognize separate moral, esthetic, economic and religious models. There is a loss of the sense of connection among objects and human beings, and a loss of the sense of their value in relation to each other.

Is the study of human communication the search for knowledge of how we make those connections? It must be. The task of critique is not to ignore or split those connections by pretending that our theoretical base can be made neutral. It is to acknowledge that that theoretical base is "loaded," and to try to understand how that loading relates to what we study. The act of attempting to understand might act as heuristic for our apprehension of the actions of individuals in a culture. Optimistically, that understanding might be not heuristic but incarnate.

If the task of critique is also to identify and study intentions, then that task must also include knowledge of the notion of prescription. All we can do is prescribe. In the sense that our notion of what should go on is how we judge the messages we receive, we have already adopted that task, even if we have not acknowledged it.

The answer to locating a source for a theory of critique is appropriately sought in moral philosophy, in what ought to be done.

Teleology

The authority for critique, then, lies in the tradition of western moral philosophy--not in the notion of philosophy as a separate discipline, but in Wittgenstein's (1953) echoes of the classical tradition, of philosophy as a process, a mode of inquiry that suffuses our critical process. The purpose of critique is a moral teleology: Critique should allow us to locate ourselves appropriately in our culture, and so the first task of criticism is to accept a definition of culture. The one proposed here is Levi-Strauss' (1979)--the creation of shared experience through the use of symbolic communication.

Culture is seen as an ongoing process, a crucial component of which is exchange among active sharers in a creative effort. Culture as an organizing theme for critique foregrounds the necessity to understand news media as a system in a larger culture, interdependent with other systems. It frames news as a process of creation of meaning-- a process that consists of gathering, writing and reading-- that cannot be studied as an end-product artifact. Starting with culture still permits attention to the more traditional subjects of critique--producer, artifact, audience-- but the model now sees them as interdependent, so that the apprehension of distinct components and actors in the

process of news now acts to inform critique rather than
splinter and render it impotent. The actors and products
can be studied independently, but they must eventually be
placed back in context as part of effective critique.

To evaluate the teleological dimension, the critique
must apply a coherence model of truth: Does the critique
reveal enough about ourselves that we can know how we per-
ceive and deal with the world? Does it help us to know
what kind of world is possible for human beings, and how we
can construct it? Can we make the information cohere with
our experiences? Does the critique demystify the process
and content of journalism?

Adopting a theoretical framework from moral philoso-
phy ensures that the critique seeks first to determine
whether the subject of the critique achieves the goal of
the critical model: Does the process of creating news help
the reader locate himself or herself appropriately in the
culture? Critique as a moral process offers solutions to
the problems of agency and contingency. The social respon-
sibility critical model is based on a fundamental
misassumption--that the solution to problems addressed by
the critique lies in a willful, personal, individual ethic
of the journalist or his or her news medium. Edwards
(1982) summarizes that orientation as seeing the world as
an occasion for our will to control it. To Murdoch (1971),
that critical orientation results in an apprehension of the
moral life as a riddle to be solved, with the key the

discovery of the right principles of action. That discovery in turn requires a particular expertise, the knowledge of "true" moral principles.

As for contingency, the proposed model acknowledges its centrality. The model refutes a metaphysical model that arose with the age of enlightenment, one that attempts to understand everything. To Wittgenstein (see Edwards, 1982), that model is nothing more than superstition, and aims at control instead of acknowledgement. A will-centered ethic places the responsibility for critique in an actor whom we must assume will be virtuous. It also depends on a self-conscious self willing the happy world as a contingent whole bounded by that willing self. In such a construct, the self becomes limiter of the world.

The proposed model instead focuses on the individual's place in the culture. It is not will-based. The role of individual agency becomes communal—the process of locating oneself. The duty-based ethic demanded by the social responsibility model is obviated. For Wittgenstein (1953), ethics is not primarily concerned with problems of conduct. Ethics exists rather as a process for discovering the permanent sense of human life so that life is understood to be "worth living" (Edwards, p. 82).

Methodology

Reading

Critique, then, becomes an ethical process that seeks to establish a way of seeing. That way of seeing

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involves recognizing images rather than literalizing them
into pictures. It involves using an image in a particular
way of seeing. The image becomes a way to see through the
object to which it is applied. Reading begins the process
by identifying the dominant elements of the work.

Recognition

        In other critical models, the concepts we use to
construct and constitute what we see are invisible and ut-
terly unconscious (Edwards, 1982). In the proposed model,
word-by-word analysis and subsequent analysis of contextual
frames acknowledges the role of newsgathering and writing
conventions in creating truth. The reader asks the follow-
ing questions: What is the goal of the story? What are the
sources cited? What is the story's point of view? Is its
contingency acknowledged--that is, is it offered as repre-
sentational "snapshot" or presentational "painting"? What
context is provided for the story? Is the story's chronol-
ogy inherent in the event reported, or is the chronology
created? Are the answers to those questions manifest in
the story content? Recognition seeks to determine how the
work conveys those "hidden" elements even as the work con-
ceals the process of conveying them.

Reconstruction

        The first goal of reconstruction is deliteral-
ization. Deliteralizing images by acknowledging what has
been left out and accepting their presentational rather
than representational nature becomes a process of

expansion. Images, then, become metaphors in the Aristotelian sense--ways to convey the sense of life, resources for finding proportion. This deliteralizing sensibility makes possible our acknowledgement that we are present in the world, that we do not simply stand outside and evaluate it.

The second goal of reconstruction is meaning construction--the process by which the reader determines whether the work is useful to himself or herself, and how. The reader asks the following questions: Are people the focus and goal of the story? What does the story "mean"? What else could it mean? How do I feel about the people and events portrayed in the story? Can I trust the story-- that is, do I feel that my reaction to the people and events is my own, tempered by my recognition of how the story is presented, or has my reaction itself been manipu- lated by the way the story is presented?

Discussion

The final goal of reconstruction is Wittgenstein's notion of the sound understanding, the acknowledgement of our own determining presence in all activity (see Edwards, 1982). In such a construct, ethics becomes a condition of the world instead of a treatment of it. The critic's aim is identical to that of the poet and artist--to acknowledge rather than to understand, because no way of seeing can be literalized as the final representation of reality. Atten- tion instead of will becomes the focus of the ethical life,

and of critique. The critical model must acknowledge what
Wittgenstein does: that consistency in action is not the
supreme moral excellence. Aristotle's conception of
judgment--attention to the individual realities confronting
us--is the source and standard of the moral life. As the
critic looks for evidence that the writer, explicitly or
implicitly, acknowledges the possibility that he or she
might be wrong, the critic acknowledges that same pos-
sibility within his or her critique. As the critic exam-
ines the work for evidence of acknowledgement by the writer
that the work is a way of seeing rather than a literal rep-
resentation, the critic acknowledges that his or her criti-
que should be seen the same way. The news story is to be
approached as a metaphor unto itself, a process that con-
stitutes a way of seeing the world, composed of other meta-
phors derived from the writer's and the reader's way of
seeing. The centrality that other models reserve for un-
derstanding why is relocated in the proposed model. The
crucial task becomes understanding how our ways of seeing
lead us to locate ourselves in the world.

    Recognizing news as a series of images rather than
as manifest fact allows us to expose the artifact and the
process, to reveal the non-literalized images and the pat-
tern of their presentation. It allows as well our aware-
ness of our own consciousness as a determining presence.
That in turn makes us see communication as Berger and Chaf-
fee (1987) urge us to--as simultaneously process and

practice, as the invention of meaning instead of the dis-
covery of truth. To Grossberg (1987), critique is located
in the dialectic between deconstruction and reconstruction.
That individual process allows us to resist seeing communi-
cation as mass relationship rather than as individual rela-
tion. As Smith (1973) says, mass communication is essen-
tially a convenient construct for the message producer.
Audiences become mass by the kinds of messages they
receive, not by what they share beforehand. The methodology
of the proposed model, inspired by deconstruction, resists
co-optation of readers into a mass audience.

  To illustrate the importance to the critic of the
coherence-based practice of deconstruction, it might be
helpful at this point to offer some examples of the fal-
lacies that critical models often assume. Schlesinger (see
Schudson, 1978) names one: the assumption that news is
something that can be evaluated against its "fit" to
reality. News, says Schlesinger, is the exercise of power
over the interpretation of reality. Gitlin (1980) cites
another fallacy: That news represents real time. Mass
media reconstruct the experience of time, says Gitlin, or-
dering events so that they make the kind of temporal as
well as logical sense that makes us feel more comfortable.
Stephens (1988) points out that the notion of objectivity
is nearly always compromised by the narrative framework of
a news story. Romano agrees. Most journalists, he says,
do not understand that what they write is "not a mirror

image of truth, but a coherent narrative of the world that serves particular purposes" (1986, p. 42). Citing Rorty (1979), Romano argues that the best journalists--or any writers--can do is to "tell stories about the world that become the histories of ideas and theories" (1986, p. 77).

The problem that remains is in how to make the methodological strategies devised by academics available to the common-sense expertise shared by the audience with whom we have entrusted critique. The tool--and the only real expertise needed--is skepticism, not in the sense of distrust, but in the sense offered by Edwards (1982): Critique is ultimately a process of attention, and attention replaces will. Here is the operationalization of the theoretical model from moral philosophy. For if we are to trust the common-sense discourse, we must accept its reliance on shared values. At the heart of those values lies the common thread for three millennia of moral philosophy: the teleology of human beings as ends in themselves.

We might well ask to identify the characteristics of the common-sense, reader-conducted critique (see Table 3-1).

Barthes identifies the critic as defamiliarizer, as the exposer of the literary conventions that have come to look like truth. Hall (1977) and Fiske (1987a, 1987b) show how audiences expose texts to achieve one of three readings--dominant, negotiated or oppositional--as part of a process of locating themselves in the text and in their

culture, of creating meaning from it in a process that is both individualized and social. Lefkovitz (1989) cites the awareness of stories as mythmaking, and mythmaking as a survival strategy, an attempt to mediate between irreconcilable oppositions.

TABLE 3-1
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE READER-CONDUCTED CRITIQUE

Theoretical base	Moral philosophy
Teleology	Humans as ends in themselves Helping reader locate himself or herself in his or her culture
Methodology	Reading Recognition Reconstruction
Tool	Common-sense discourse

Finally, we see indications in the so-called credibility crisis among mass news media that audiences are already conducting their own common-sense critique. In the proposed model, the reader skepticism manifested in the current credibility crisis is the appropriate response, to be nurtured rather than distrusted, a potentially moral action based on the individual reader's ethic of attention and his or her goal of locating himself or herself within his or her culture.

CHAPTER 4
CRITIQUE AS MORAL PROCESS

Introduction

In this and the following two chapters, I shall ex-
amine how existing models of mass media criticism address
the fundamental components of the proposed critical model:
the theoretical basis for critique as a moral process; the
correspondence and coherence models of truth; and the way
criticism is conducted, focusing on the newsgatherer and
the reader as critic, and on how each handles the text and
context of news. Chapter 7 will comprise an examination of
how models of literary criticism address the same com-
ponents.

Social Responsibility

The moral groundwork for the social responsibility
model of criticism is decidedly teleological. Criticism
has a goal, and that goal is better-informed citizens for
whom news enhances the ability to participate in governing
themselves. The appropriate critical actors in the social
responsibility model are morally trained newsgatherers op-
erating from a universalizable ethic of serving the public
good. For those newsgatherers, morality is seen as an
orientation rather than as a process.

Blumler (1983) applies the standard of an informed citizenry to communication research. Communication research for democracy, he says, should look at the arrangements, patterns and outcomes most likely to promote or block realization of democratic values, or it should show how far those values have been attained. Lippmann (1920) charged newsgatherers with remembering that the chief purpose of news is to enable humans to live successfully toward the future. Elsewhere (1971), Lippmann cautions against newsgatherers providing readers a misleading "picture inside" based on received facts about the world. That notion of the press' moral responsibility is rather more Aristotelian than other social responsibility models, because it contains the seeds of morality as process. In its five standards for the press, the Hutchins Commission report (1947) also reflects its embracing of the notion that the press' moral duty is to help create an informed citizenry.

In the social responsibility model, the locus of morality is in moral actors who have been trained in an expert moral discourse. Those moral actors are the newsgatherers, infused by their training with a will-driven ethic that qualifies them to judge what is best for their audiences. Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler (1987) argue that journalists should be among society's best-trained moral thinkers. As Edwards (1982) points out, such a construct views the world as an occasion for our will to

control it. Morality thus becomes a riddle to be solved, and the key is the discovery of the right principles of action. Acting morally requires moral knowledge, and moral knowledge is gained by learning the "true" moral principles. Moral realities become obstacles to overcome or tasks to be performed, and the moral life is looked on as a technical problem to be solved using expert techniques. Will-based morality views others as settings for moral action, to be treated according to moral precepts.

Thus decisions can be made using the "it's what the readers want" rationale, and Isaacs (1986) can place the failure of news media to act ethically on poor training of lower- and middle-management in values and decision-making. Similarly, Abel (1981) places responsibility for the performance of mass media on the ethics and public-spiritedness of individual journalists and media outlets. Rivers and Schramm (1969) are more catholic in their approach, concluding that government, mass media and the public must share responsibility for the news media's performance, but they emphasize that government must not be allowed to control the media.

In addition to approaching morality as will-based and appropriately centered in the journalist, the social responsibility model views morality as an orientation rather than as a process. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986) found that most American journalists are driven both by a desire for autonomy in their work and by a sense of altruism. In

prescribing a formula for moral conduct, Christians, Rot-
zoll and Fackler (1987) list several moral orientations,
what they call guidelines for ethical norms. Among them
are Aristotle's golden mean, Kant's categorical imperative,
Mill's principle of utility, and Rawl's veil of ignorance.
They also describe loyalties in terms of a sense of duty to
individuals or institutions.

Critical models based on social responsibility fre-
quently assume their moral starting point without justify-
ing or offering a rationale for it. For example, Goldstein
(1989) emphasizes the importance of truth in journalism,
but he embraces a correspondence model of truth without
even acknowledging that other models exist. Isaacs (1986)
offers a laundry list of standards for journalists--
accuracy, balance, fairness, compassion, depth, ethical
performance and objectivity --without defining them.
Similarly, the appropriate moral actor is usually taken to
be the journalist.

Such assumptions about a moral groundwork are self-
limiting. They preclude consideration of questions that
other critical models find central. For example, the no-
tion that what is appropriate is a journalist-centered
ethic based on a duty to provide readers with true informa-
tion closes off the possibility that journalists par-
ticipate--willingly or not --in the promulgation of false
consciousness, and that it is a delusion to promote the
idea that people have any real control over their lives.

Morality in the social responsibility model likewise fails
to acknowledge the debate over hegemony.

Further, the locus of morality in the journalist as
morally trained expert requires that morality can be
achieved only through an expert discourse. It also
precludes the possibility that audiences lacking training
in that discourse can do criticism. Merrill (1974), while
rejecting social responsibility as a model for news media,
maintains the necessity of locating moral judgment in the
journalist. He calls on newsgatherers to adopt a sense of
duty to a self-determined morality, freely and rationally
arrived at, with personal responsibility for the con-
sequences of their commitment. The virtuous journalist,
Merrill says, would possess wisdom, courage, temperance and
justice. Elsewhere, Lowenstein and Merrill (1990) ac-
knowledge the importance of flexibility in following duty-
based principles.

But principles derived from such moral expertise
are, by definition, more likely to be universalized, taking
on the mantle of inflexible imperative. Thus, while opin-
ing that objectivity is dead and social responsibility
stillborn, Christians (1977) searches Aristotle, Kant and
Hume for universal principles as a way to fill the moral
void.

Critical Theory/Cultural Studies

The critical theory/cultural studies critical model
shifts the focus of the moral debate from the newsgatherer

to the reader. But the debate deals not with the reader as moral actor. Instead it focuses on the impact on the reader of moral decisions made by others. Morality is seen more as a process than in the social responsibility model, but the process still requires an expert discourse.   The critical theory/cultural studies model often identifies the newsgatherer as failed moral actor, and the academic as the appropriate critic.

Boorstin (1960, 1971) places responsibility for the effects of news media in the moral decisions made by news-gatherers and media owners. In his celebrated discussions of the role of pseudo-events in the creation of news, Boorstin proposes that responsibility for making the world in-teresting has shifted from God to the journalist. That shift, in turn, has led audiences to expect too much of the world, and of its own power to shape the world.

Gitlin (1981) identifies the critical moral problem in his analysis of the fundamental flaw of what he calls the dominant sociological paradigm of mass communication. That flaw is the paradigm's inability to conduct critique. The paradigm settles instead for justifying the existing system of mass media ownership, control and purpose. The paradigm also fails to measure meaningfully the effect on audiences of its own failure to conduct critique. Again, the focus of the impact of moral decision-making is the reader, but the moral decision-maker is the mass media practitioner.

The critical theory/cultural studies model usually locates appropriate moral action in the academic discourse. That notion is apparent in Grossberg's (1987) identification of the concepts of difference, struggle and empowerment as fundamental to the critique of mass media, and in Gitlin's (1987) emphasis on hegemony. In seeing morality more as process than as orientation, the orientation of the critical theory/cultural studies model differs fundamentally from that of the social responsibility model. But critical theory/cultural studies shares with social responsibility the apprehension that an expert discourse is necessary to engage in the process of morality effectively. In reacting to the moral decisions of others as manifested in the mass media messages they produce, the reader engages in an essentially amoral (in the sense that it is not grounded in an expert moral discourse), reactive ideological struggle.

Critical theory proclaims its own power in its understanding of the complex causal relationships between communicative practices and the social totality, and sees communication as the expression of already existing relations of power (Grossberg, 1987). But that thesis reflects its own obverse: As Piccone (1978) points out, the critical theory/cultural studies model sees the dominant orientation in communication narrowly, as political. That political orientation limits the extent to which the model can ground itself morally.

To Grossberg (1987), the creation of meaning that is the process of communication is located in the dialectic between deconstruction and reconstruction by the reader. Elsewhere (1979), Grossberg argues for greater consideration of the moral and ethical dimensions of theories. But in limiting critique to the landscape of deconstructive/ reconstructive dialectic, while locating morality in the news producers, such a critical/cultural construct restricts theoretical consideration of the moral dimensions of critique.

<div align="center">

Marxism
</div>

The central notion of the Marxist model of criticism--that news media are creators and purveyors of false consciousness--limits the usefulness and purity of any moral orientation that that critique might recommend, because audiences have already been deceived by false consciousness (Lemert, 1989). In such a system, false consciousness renders audiences incapable of critique and of effective moral action. The focus of the moral debate is the audience, but critique requires expertise. Moral orientation is similarly useless to the news gatherer, because practice dictates that the producers of news ignore any criteria but expedience in making judgments about news (Schiller, 1983b).

Whatever moral orientation is used by newsgatherers is tailored to benefit ruling elites. For example, the notion of objectivity is promoted as a moral goal, but its

effect is to serve news organizations by protecting the
news organizations from charges of bias (Tuchman, 1972),
and to reassure the reader that he or she is not being
deceived.

Given the futility of moral action by newsgatherers
and readers, the place for the moral discourse in the
Marxist model is necessarily in those who have been
trained, who possess the expertise to recognize and resist
false consciousness. As in the critical theory/cultural
studies critical model, the moral basis is audience-cen-
tered, but the practice of morality is not.

The essential problem with the Marxist model is its
insistence on the economic and political as the fundamental
dimensions of critique. In such a construct, critique as
moral process that can be conducted by the reader is sup-
planted by critique as counter-ideology that demands ex-
pertise and training in a particular expert discourse. For
Marx, the dynamic of concealment in the social hieroglyphic
was the point of critique (D'Amico, 1981), implying not
only that the locus of investigation should be in those who
conceal, and their artifacts (Schiller, 1983a), but also
that the revelation of the process of concealment was the
task of experts.

In the work of certain post-Marxist critics, how-
ever, there are indications of the acknowledgement of the
place for critique as an essentially moral process con-
ducted by the reader. Cockburn (1986) sees press criticism

as the preservation of dissent and criticality in society.
Cockburn locates that dissent in the churches, in the labor
movement, and on campuses. But the challenge to the dis-
course of power, he says, must be in the form of a politi-
cal movement of the left.

Habermas (1979) relocates the crisis in communica-
tion from the economic and political sphere to the sphere
of individual motivation and culture. Such a reconsidera-
tion allows for the possibility of critique as an examina-
tion conducted by the reader of how mass media affect our
relations with our culture. Specifically, the critique can
focus on the problem of how the individual uses mass media
to locate himself or herself. It also sees the fundamental
discourse as language-based and audience-dependent,
grounded in reflective reason and the developmental logic
of communicative and moral competence (Farrell, 1987).
Thus, it allows the possibility of the reader as effective
moral actor.

Empiricism

The empirical model of criticism is generally mute
on the question of moral orientation. Berger and Chaffee
(1987) do note a recent shift in the emphasis of mass com-
munication research from the methodological to the theoret-
ical, but Lemert (1989) concludes that the empiricist crit-
ical model frequently borrows its standards--and presumably
its moral basis--from the social responsibility model. As
discussed previously, that model in turn frequently assumes

rather than specifically addresses its moral orientation.
Empiricism sees itself essentially as a methodological
model for measuring the morality of an action (Lemert,
1989). In that sense, the model sees morality as a techni-
cal problem (Edwards, 1982).

Delia (1987) cites the absence of a moral groundwork
from empiricism as the reason an early attempt to bring the
Frankfurt School into American mass communication research
failed. Exponents of the Frankfurt School bridled at the
ahistorical and uncritical posture of the empiricists, and
at their quantitative, marketing style.

Because the empirical critical model generally as-
sumes its own moral orientation, what evidence exists of
that moral orientation is indirect. It can be traced to
the acceptance by empiricists of the appropriateness of the
scientific method. As Kuhn (1970) describes it, that view
posits the world as a logical problem to be solved through
observation, careful recording and rigorous analysis. The
underlying premise is the assumption of a clocklike order
to the universe.

That orientation leads in turn to the adoption of a
will-based morality. If the world is seen as the oppor-
tunity to solve a problem by investigation, then morality,
as Edwards (1982) summarizes, consists in seeing people as
a series of opportunities where morality manifests itself
as a technical problem to be solved by will-directed ac-
tion.

For example, Janowitz (1975) concluded that the gatekeeper model of the professional journalist was appropriate because it seeks to apply the canons of scientific method to increase objectivity and professional performance. Little attempt is made to define either goal, and the author acknowledges the constraints to the model--institutional pressures, personal limitations, and time. There is no apparent apprehension that a model that can neither accommodate nor address those constraints--morally or methodologically--is insufficient.

Ong (1988) argues that the scientific world-view is not inherent in the universe but is the product of the development of the literate technology, which made possible reflection and abstraction. Hence there is likewise no "natural" basis for a will-based moral orientation in which morality depends on human beings as agents of change through will. As Wittgenstein (1953) concluded, the will-based moral orientation assumes the world as we see it and will it to be.

The essential problem with the moral orientation of the empiricist critical model is its endemic nature. It is often assumed, and seldom either addressed or acknowledged (Gitlin, 1981). Other problems arise from that fundamental one. Because the moral orientation is not readily identifiable, the assumption of a will-driven morality likewise takes on the aura of inevitability, of the authority commensurate with the "natural" order that science "discovers"

guiding the universe. Besides placing on that universe an artifactual moral order that is not derived from it, such a construct isolates even the willing self from the culture surrounding the self.

CHAPTER 5
THE TELEOLOGY OF TRUTH

Introduction

To evaluate the teleological dimension of the pro-
posed critical model, the critique employs a coherence
model of truth (see Kant, 1785/1969). The coherence model
is appropriate for several reasons, which should become
clear as we attempt to distinguish it from the cor-
respondence model of truth.

The correspondence model of truth posits that state-
ments are true or false in relation to whether they cor-
respond to our notions of reality. It assumes that reality
is something we can apprehend unmediated by our perceptual
equipment, that context is insignificant, that identity is
infallible and constant conjunction is a law of nature. In
the correspondence model, truth consists of or can be de-
rived from data, an accumulation of a series of individual
observations that can be shown to correspond to reality,
or, as Kuhn characterizes it, "the match . . . between the
entities with which the theory (being tested) populates na-
ture and what is 'really there'" (1970, p. 206).

To Kant, a model of truth that sought concepts that
corresponded to objects in nature resulted in a false

debate, one that led to skepticism because of the im-
possibility of knowing indubitably whether concepts match
objects. For Kant, the goal instead was self-knowledge
about the concepts we create. Our concept of truth must be
anchored in what is obtainable from experience, but not in
the sense of a concept-to-observed reality "fit." The fit
instead is in how our new information coheres with our pre-
vious experiences. Truth becomes metaphoric in the
Aristotelian sense of metaphor as a representation that
helps us take up life and carry it to completion.

In the coherence model, lying consists of ignoring
experience and the possibility of alternative explanations,
and of refusing to confront and resolve contradiction in
the form of alternative experience.

Fundamental to the proposed model of criticism is
the notion that, in their use of selected experiences and
observations, in the meaning they create with the language
they use, and in the institutional constraints placed on
the news production process and its product, news media
tacitly acknowledge that they operate from a coherence
model of truth. But in the justification they offer for
their work--invoking standards of accuracy, fairness and
objectivity--they instruct audiences to read news using a
correspondence model of truth. The task of critique quick-
ly becomes pointless and exhausts itself if it is limited
to a correspondence-based evaluation of what is already
tacitly acknowledged to be coherence-based. For Romano,

journalism as it is practiced in the United States consists
of a process of selection from among putative facts:

> In the 20th century, the doubt about 'naive
> realism' seems to have gained the upper hand
> in every field except American journalism.
> There the American journalist's belief in the
> possibility of objectively representing
> reality seems as naive as thinking the whole
> world operates in English. (1986, p. 76)

The job of critique, then, becomes to train the
audience-as-critic to adopt the coherence model in the pro-
cess of creating meaning that is reading. For Aristotle,
virtue consists of action that leads to locating oneself
appropriately. Critique-as-process is faithful to that.
The coherence model of truth suggests questions the
reader/critic can apply to the critical process: Does the
critique reveal enough about ourselves that we can know how
we perceive and deal with the world? Does it help us to
know what kind of world is possible for human beings, and
how we can construct it? Can we make the information
cohere with our experiences? Does the critique demystify
the process and content of journalism?

The coherence model also provides a way to achieve
the moral teleology that is the goal of critique in the
proposed model. If news stories become the artifacts of
the Aristotelian conception of metaphor, then how they es-
tablish context and help readers achieve completion becomes
a subject for critique. As Auxter (1982) observes, moral
experience is inseparable from larger considerations of the
kind of milieu into which decisions are assimilated. That

entails acknowledging responsibility for the kind of society, the kind of civilization and the kind of reality we are creating. In other words, the problems of agency and contingency in critique are handled by acknowledgment and incorporation.

Finally, the coherence model of truth provides a bridge from the proposed critical model's theoretical base to its methodological framework by making apparent the impossibility of restricting critique to the manifest content of a news story.

Our understanding of the value of the coherence model of truth to the proposed critical model may be made clearer by an examination of how the existing models of news media criticism approach truth models.

Social Responsibility

Goldstein (1989) summarizes his review of a century of criticism of the mass media with a commentary on the essentiality of truth in journalism-- the notion that a reader can be confident that nothing he or she reads or watches was made up. That conclusion could likewise serve to summarize truth as it is conceived by the social responsibility model. The social responsibility model embraces without analyzing the correspondence model of truth. Among its tenets: Observation must precede very other journalistic activity; information presented to readers must meet tests of credibility; a "pure" standard of truth exists.

Truth was central to models of social responsibility both early and late. To Lippmann (1920), truth was the ultimate standard, even though, he said, publishers were failing utterly to meet it. The journalist should concern himself with searching for the truth and publishing it, with caring more for the truth than for the privilege of arguing about ideas in a fog of uncertainty. Forty years later, Jensen (1960) identified objectivity as one criterion by which journalism schools should evaluate news media.

The centrality of truth to the social responsibility model is all but assumed. But that assumption carries little evidence of a systematic analysis of the nature of the truth for which proponents of the social responsibility model argue.

Indeed, as Schudson (1978) shows, there was nothing inevitable about the evolution of journalistic truth. In the 19th century, two models of truth emerged. For the most part they did not compete with each other because they catered to different audiences. The so-called New York Times informational model, separating facts from value judgments, was thought to appeal to upper class newspaper readers. The more affective "story" model was peddled to the lower and middle classes. To some extent, that dichotomy persists today, manifested in the columns of the so-called quality daily newspapers and in the supermarket tabloids.

The informational model itself was in part the pro-
duct of the confluence of economics and technology, what
Marxists identify as the principal task of capitalism, the
establishment of new markets. The advent of the telegraph
made possible the rise of the wire services. The wire ser-
vices, faced with a potential clientele that still con-
sisted mostly of a politicized, advocacy press, began to
strive for balance in their dispatches so that they could
appeal to all segments of the market (Emery, Ault & Agee,
1970). Inevitably, newspapers became what their suppliers
provided. The advent of the telephone facilitated the
evolution of the concept of truth as the representation of
"both sides" of an issue. The telephone made it easier for
journalists on deadline to reach the subject of a critical
attack by another source or sources and to get "his side"
in the newspaper.

By the end of World War I, however, the rise of pub-
lic relations as a profession and the emerging sophistica-
tion of war propaganda convinced some journalists that the
world they reported was the one that the players in that
world wanted reported. The increasing demands of tech-
nology-induced competition and deadlines likewise led to an
institutionalization of journalism that profoundly affected
the news product (Schudson, 1978).

The reaction of journalists to the forces that were
shaping the "truth" was typified by Lippmann (1920). Rath-
er than resolving to inform their readers that what they

were reading was a journalistic truth--a product of a specific and rigidly bounded process--journalists were urged to overcome the control mechanism and outright lying by news sources and the institutional pressures affecting the production of news. They were to accept the responsibility for ferreting out and presenting the unvarnished truth. Lippmann preached that observation must precede every other journalistic activity, that information presented to readers must meet tests of credibility, that the writer must practice rigorous discipline in the use of words. But Lippmann also argued that the journalist's task was to organize news to make it comprehensible to the reader, and thus to educate the human response. Truth was the ultimate standard, but it could stand some tinkering.

The correspondence model of truth was less tightly embraced in the Hutchins Commission report (1947). The report called for creation of a national news council that would investigate press lying. The commission also charged the press with providing readers full access to the day's intelligence, and it acknowledged the possibility of explanation based on alternative experience by recommending that the press seek out minority and other little-represented viewpoints.

Phillips (1977), comparing journalistic and social science approaches to objectivity, found that the constraints reporters face in producing news every day--deadlines, multiple stories, a concern for balance--leaves

them with an acquaintance with instead of a knowledge of events. It leads to a kind of journalism in which the facts often mask the truth by putting the mark of truth on an event. There is little time for journalists to pursue a social science model of understanding that looks for regularities and patterns among events and studies them in the context of universals that are derived from theoretical reflection rather than personal participation.

Similarly, Epstein (1973) concluded that the processes of a news organization result in a news product that reflects what he calls journalistic truth. That journalistic truth reflects certain consistent directions in selecting, covering and reformulating events that, over the long term, are clearly related to the organizational needs of the institution that produces the news.

Boorstin (1960, 1971) focuses on how news sources fulfill the needs of news producers in creating an ersatz truth that is characterized by the rampant substitution of the artificial for the real, of the image for the reality. The basis for much news, he says, is the pseudo-event. The pseudo-event is not spontaneous, is arranged for the convenience of the news media, bears an ambiguous relationship to the underlying reality of the situation, and is intended to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The press conference, he says, is the epitome of the pseudo-event. Echoing Lippmann (1971), Boorstin concludes that news media portray interpretations of reality that audiences internalize.

As Schudson (1978) points out, there remains little apprehension by proponents of the social responsibility model of critique that the notion of objectivity itself constitutes bias. The impact of the objectivity standard on coverage of class and cultural conflict is all but ignored; until recently, the idea that objectivity as a standard served those in power was not entertained. Social responsibility assumes that a "pure" standard of truth exists, or existed once, but is being violated. Christians (1977), for example, laments that objectivity is dead, and that the trend in news is toward expediency and accommodation.

To Schudson, objectivity as a standard assumes a substantive political orientation. It also ignores the impact of the Heisenberg effect, the notion that what is observed is altered by the act of observation. The potential of the Heisenberg effect for interference is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the process of newsgathering, and probably manifests itself most sharply in television news.

Hayakawa (1972) identifies several semantic and methodological pitfalls that, in news, may be a result of Lippmann's conception of the journalist's duty to organize news and make it comprehensible. Among the most frequent traps: Confusion of the word for the thing, the map for the territory, and the extensional meaning for the intensional

meaning. Hayakawa also cites the one-word, one-meaning fallacy and the two-valued orientation.

Professional models of social responsibility admit no ideological orientation by newsgatherers, and frequently deny or ignore the mediating influence of the medium itself. As Tuchman (1978) concluded, the newsgathering process tends to fractionalize events into segments that are treated as if they can stand alone as facts. Those segments are then selectively accreted into what is presented as truth. The "none of this was made up" standard (Goldstein, 1989) urges readers to assume that nothing was left out, either. Instead, as Romano (1986) argues, journalists combine their freedom to choose among words with the influences of habit, ideology and their understanding of what readers want to come up with the "facts" that readers customarily accept as such.

In short, the social responsibility model allows and encourages journalists to work from a coherence model in gathering and presenting the news, but it urges audiences to process the news using a correspondence model.

<u>Critical Theory/Cultural Studies</u>

The critical theory/cultural studies critical model rejects the correspondence model of truth. The model also rejects what critical theory/cultural studies argues is the artificial separation of facts from values (Schudson, 1978). The model recognizes truth as shaped by historical consciousness (Carey, 1974), and it challenges the

presumption that true and reliable statements about social life can be made (Farrell, 1987).

To Carey (1974), consciousness itself has a history, the facts of a society are the imaginations people have of one another, and the imaginations behind events are marked more by variety than by uniformity. In many instances, perhaps most instances, the news media are the source of those imaginations, or at least provide the raw material for them. Given that history of consciousness, Carey says, the dominant "whig" paradigm of journalism in the United States--that it represents a steady evolutionary progress toward freedom and knowledge--is baseless, and the truth that that paradigm confidently posits and strives for is meaningless.

The rejection of the correspondence model of truth is grounded in Wittgenstein's (1953) demonstration that the notion of truth as a stable relationship of subjects and objects is without foundation. The word "fact" has nothing to do with the world itself. Instead, it describes the language we use to describe the world. Adherents of the critical theory/cultural studies model find abundant evidence-- in newsgathering and its product--of the tenuous nature of the correspondence model of truth. Smith (1973), for example, argues that the process of gathering television news results in the news as a representation of facts, not the facts themselves. Similarly, Epstein (1973) found that newsgathering was both highly idiosyncratic on an

individual level and at the same time constricted by pro-
cesses that reflect the needs of the newsgathering organi-
zation. One consequence of that process, Carey (1987)
argues, is that, for the sake of convenience if nothing
else, it allows truth to become synonymous with
credibility: News often counts as true if news-gatherers
and their sources think audiences will believe it.

        The solution for the critical theory/cultural
studies model is acknowledgement. It rejects the artifi-
cial separation of facts from values (Schudson, 1978) es-
tablished as a standard during the nineteenth century. It
argues for context, for acknowledgement and exposition of
the role of consciousness and idiosyncrasy in journalistic
truth.

        The principal difficulty with the critical theory/
cultural studies model is that it arrives at a model of
truth by default. It recognizes the coherence-based model
of truth only circumspectly, by systematically dismantling
the correspondence model. Acknowledgment of the failure of
the correspondence model is often as close as critical
theory/cultural studies comes to embracing a model of its
own.

        A product of that approach is the notion that truth
must always be distrusted. Rather than making clear that
the danger lies in universal, unquestioning acceptance of
the news media's truth-as-correspondence construct, the

critical theory/cultural studies model often argues by omission, leaving a void where a beacon is needed.

Marxism

To Marxists, truth in its journalistic incarnation becomes both a commodity to be sold for profit (Schiller, 1983c) and an ideological tool that ensures the preservation of the false consciousness that is the enabling context for capitalism (Carey, 1987). The news producers' political and economic orientation becomes the source underlying the news media's representation of the world. Truth in the Marxist model is a synthetic construct based on the resolution of conflict.

Jouet (1981) summarizes the role of mass media in capitalist society as twofold: They are economic enterprises rooted in capitalist production, and they serve as purveyors of ideological norms and values. Newsgatherers employed by the elites who control news organizations engage in self-delusion, convincing themselves that they are presenting a truthful, correspondence-based account that helps their audiences participate in their society and determine their own destiny. At the same time, those newsgatherers enrich and consolidate the power of ruling elites by peddling truth as a commodity, and by presenting as true carefully managed information whose fundamental purpose is twofold: to create and expand markets by instilling a false sense of need in consumers, and to delude

the masses into believing they have the political power of self-determination.

For Habermas (1979), the Marxist inquiry must shift its emphasis from an economic and political focus to the impact of capitalism on communication as social interaction. Similarly, Levi-Strauss (1979) recognizes the role of symbolic structures--myth--in social control and cohesion, resulting in manipulation through the symbolic realm. Truth in a Marxist model is that which exposes false consciousness, and the symbolic is a critical element of that process of demystification (D'Amico, 1981). Truth becomes the locus of struggle, and is both the dialectic process and its product (Schiller, 1983a). The struggle to replace false consciousness becomes true action, and truth is what emerges from the dialectic.

But the Marxist concept of truth as synthetic is self-limiting; it assumes that truth must lie within the boundaries of the dialectic. Jouet (1981) points out a flaw in the process of that dialectic. Marxism allows for the analysis of society component by component instead of as an integrated whole, a methodological problem that late Marxists are still struggling with. In that methodology, Marxism shares with social responsibility a problem that the latter model manifests in its product, the notion of truth as constructed of facts isolated from context and re-accreted into a representational whole.

Empiricism

More than any of the other critical models discussed herein, empiricism embraces the correspondence model of truth. The correspondence model offers the theoretical justification underlying the empirical methodology. Truth can be arrived at by observation, and knowledge is the end result of the search for correspondence-based truth.

Stevenson's (1983) restatement of Descartes' four rules of logic as marching orders for the empiricist is illustrative of the nature of empirical truth. Descartes' rules include the admonition to accept nothing as true that the researcher does not clearly recognize to be so. That the empirical and social responsibility critical models share the correspondence model of truth is no accident. As empiricism borrows its moral orientation from social responsibility, so social responsibility borrows its conception of truth from empiricism. Knowledge, the goal of the empiricist's search for the truth, consists of "true" inferences that can be drawn or made based on observations that correspond to reality.

But as Stempel and Westley (1981) point out, knowledge frequently requires abstraction--drawing back from experience to conceptualize problems in general terms. The rigor with which the empiricist critique defines truth when considering the nature of the evidence it accepts and the methodology for collecting it occasionally is not matched by how the model recognizes truth in the data. An example

is the frequent blurring of truth and credibility in studies measuring the latter (see Abel & Wirth, 1977, on audience perceptions of the credibility of television vs. newspaper news reports).

With their standard of observation-based truth, empiricist critics frequently ignore the potential effects of the decisions made about what data to gather, and how it is to be gathered, on the "truth" that is revealed. While the data-gathering process itself may be scrupulously defined and monitored for the effect of bias, the impact of decision-making at the theoretical and hypothetical levels might not be apprehended.

Furthermore, where the standard of truth becomes proof by observation, the empiricist ignores Wittgenstein's (1953) dismantling of the notion of identity and Hume's of constant conjunction (see Selby-Bigge, 1970). Popper's (1957) falsification standard seems intuitively more satisfactory, and has been widely adopted, but the very fact that it has supplanted confirmation as a standard also demonstrates the weakness of the empiricist notion of truth as correspondence. The idea that the appropriate methodology for finding the truth is subject to revision or replacement argues against the notion of truth as a natural and unchanging entity that awaits discovery by observation.

Kuhn (1970) demonstrates the greater likelihood of truth as construction rather than as entity in his discussion of paradigm shift. Kuhn identifies paradigm shift as

the fundamental process of scientific discovery. For example, he points to science's reliance on textbooks in scientific training, systematically substituting them for the creative scientific literature that made them possible (1970). That substitution, he says, results in a narrow and rigid education that in turn leads to a scientific community that is an "immensely efficient instrument for solving problems or puzzles its paradigms define" (1970, p. 166). But when science repudiates a former paradigm, it renounces most of what has been written under that earlier paradigm, resulting in a 1984-like rewriting of history by the current powers that be (1970). The paradigm shift--wholesale and often radical replacement of one scientific paradigm by another essentially unrelated one--is itself a refutation of the construct of immutable truth.

Further, science recognizes one uniquely competent professional group as sole arbiter of achievement: itself. Members of a scientific discipline are the possessors of the basis for unequivocal judgments; to doubt that they share the same standards for evaluation "would inevitably raise the question whether truth in the sciences can be one" (1970, p. 168).

Finally, the scientific approach frequently assumes its own evolution not as a movement away from a beginning but as progress toward "some one full, objective, true account of nature" (1970, p. 171).

CHAPTER 6
THE METHODOLOGICAL FOCUS OF CRITIQUE:
NEWSGATHERER, TEXT AND CONTEXT, READER

Introduction

The proposed model for the critique of news media
borrows from poststructuralist literary theory to posit
news as a product of a process of meaning creation involv-
ing the producer of the story, the manifest content and
surrounding context of the story, and the reader. For the
purposes of the proposed model's methodology, the news
story is seen as an artifactual text, created from con-
scious and unconscious decisions by media organizations and
newsgatherers. The reader then completes the news process
by creating meaning from that text. In the proposed model
the reader is presented as an appropriate and suitably ex-
pert critic. This chapter will examine how existing models
of news media criticism treat the newsgatherer, the
manifest content of news, the context from which it was
produced, and the reader. It will also identify who each
model identifies as the appropriate critic. The conclu-
sions are summarized in Table 6-1.

TABLE 6-1
HOW CRITICAL MODELS TREAT ELEMENTS OF THE NEWS PROCESS

Model	Newsgatherer	Content and Context	Reader
Social Responsibility	Focus of critique; may or may not be appropriate critic	Product of a process	Unprepared to act as critic
Critical/ Cultural	Appropriate focus of critique; inappropriate as critic	Content and context indivisible as focus of critique	Appropriate focus of critique; lacks expertise to conduct critique
Marxism	Appropriate focus of critique; incapable of acting as critic	Content as cultural form that reinforces dominant ideology	How reader creates meaning is focus of critique; reader is too influenced by false consciousness to act as critic
Empiricism	Appropriate as focus; does not possess scientific detachment required for critique	Sources of data and evidence; can be investigated separately	Appropriate focus of effects research to support critique; lacks expertise to conduct critique

Social Responsibility

The newsgatherer

Critics who adopt the social responsibility model generally focus their critique on either the newsgatherer

or the news product, but occasionally the emphasis is on both. There is also little consensus about who should do the critique, but the difference in opinion does not cover a broad spectrum. Newsgatherers aver that the responsibility for criticism lies with the news media themselves, and they guard their perceived franchise jealously (Lemert, 1989). They resist and tend to ignore "outside" criticism. At the same time, they have been slow to undertake criticism of themselves, or at least to share that self-criticism with the public. The relatively recent institutions of news councils, journalism reviews and ombudsmen all have met opposition. Brown's (1974) history of press criticism focuses on press councils, ombudsmen, codes of ethics and the Hutchins Commission report, but it is a chronicle of practically unmitigated failure. For Shaw (1984) and Hulteng (1981), the impetus for self-criticism was expedience: If the press did not watch itself, the government might. Tebbel (1972) arrives at self-criticism by the press by default. Journalism schools should be professional training grounds, he says. There is no room or reason in them for academic pursuits, including critique.

Perhaps not surprisingly, academic advocates of the social responsibility model argue that they are the appropriate critics. In the academic tradition of trained, impartial, disinterested inquiry lies the locus for critique, they argue. Jensen (1960) urged that media criticism

should not be simply one concern of journalism schools; it should be the central concern. For Lazarsfeld (1948), mass media criticism needed legitimacy and systematization, both of which could be gotten by adopting the standards of empirical data-gathering. The appropriate place to meet those standards was academe. Rarely among academics (see Rivers & Schramm, 1969, for one example), we see acknowledgement that government, press and public must share responsibility for the press' performance. But that is not the same as advocating that the critique of news media should be located in any of those institutions. Isaacs (1986) does provide that advocacy. Lower- and middle-level media managers should be trained in values and decision-making, he argues. And a national press council should be established to monitor and critique the press.

Whether the locus of criticism is the newsroom or academe, and whether the object of that criticism is the newsgatherers or their product, criticism from the social responsibility model generally concerns itself with three subjects--the way journalists go about their jobs, the impact of their methods on the news they produce, and the standards for performance the press should adopt. Christians (1977) and Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler (1987) offer an example of the last. For them, journalists must be the agents of responsible performance, accepting their role as a duty, acting from a basis of free will, with the roots of their decision-making one of the ethical

norms from traditional philosophy. They should be among
society's best-trained moral thinkers.

Merrill (1974) cannot be considered a social
responsibility-based critic, as evidenced by his rejection
of it because it is an institutional model. Social respon-
sibility, he says, replaces the libertarian tenet of self-
determined morality with a notion of collective conscience
that abandons individual responsibility. Merrill embraces
the libertarian model of editorial self-determinism. But
that model manifests itself in a way remarkably similar to
the social responsibility model. Journalists should pos-
sess a sense of duty to a self-determined morality, Merrill
says, freely and rationally arrived at. He calls for the
journalistic scientist--the free journalist who tempers his
judgment with reason, sensitivity and commitment. For Mer-
rill, the difference is that the libertarian journalist is
motivated by freedom and responsibility as intrinsically
good. The journalist who adopts the social responsibility
model acts on a goal-oriented principle--service to his or
her culture. The difference in the two models is the dif-
ference between ontology and teleology, but the irony is
that, while rejecting the means of social responsibility,
libertarianism is unable to divorce itself from social re-
sponsibility's goals.

Aronson (1972) called on the press to respond to at-
tacks from the Nixon administration by abandoning quies-
cence and paying even greater attention to underground,

disenfranchised and counterculture groups. Lippmann (1971) calls on reporters to engage in more intuitive analysis to keep themselves mindful that their work creates a "pseudo-environment" that constitutes received knowledge about the world for most readers, and that that "picture inside" is what readers use to establish a framework for dealing with the world.

Examples of the focus on how newsgatherers do their jobs frequently combine a critical and a research orientation. Among those examples are several classics in the academic literature of mass communication. White's (1950) celebrated gatekeeper study was an attempt to determine how decision-making by one wire editor determined the news readers would see. White found that the editor's standards included whether the incident was worthy of being reported; whether it was the best of many available accounts of the same event; whether there was space in the newspaper for the story and time to edit it; the quality of writing and the length of the story, and the editor's perception of what the reader wants or needs. His conclusions seem obvious today: Many of the editor's decisions were highly subjective value judgments. Breed (1960) focused on the way a newspaper's policy and the sociology of its newsroom affected the way news was gathered and reported. He concluded that every newspaper has a policy, acknowledged or not; that often the publisher's wishes regarding coverage of certain, usually class-related topics was followed, but

that those wishes were seldom stated overtly because of journalists' ethical proscriptions against publisher influence; that journalists' primary source of rewards was their peers and editors, not their readers, and that often, rather than adhering to societal and professional ideals, the newsgatherer redefined his values according to those shared by the newsroom group.

Gieber (1964) reported findings similar to Breed's, but Gieber expanded his inquiry to include the conflicts between reporters and sources. News, he found, is often the product of the conflicts between reporter and source and within the newsroom social system. Sources tend to talk connotatively, stressing issues, trends, impact, and the struggle for consensus. Because the news process demands subjects that can easily and quickly be characterized and encapsulated, reporters communicate denotatively, stressing names instead of values, action instead of meaning, controversy instead of consensus. Reporters often see the context for a story and lobby for including it, but deadlines, space and work loads militate against them. Reporters also tend to agree with the agendas set by local officials. Crouse (1974) found that reporters used the efficiency of a political campaign's news organization as a measure of the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire campaign. Sigal (1973), concluded similarly. Reporters, he found, were essentially organization men.

Westin (1982), in a so-called "insider's" response to "outside" critics, concluded that television news is obsessed with time and technology. He echoed Sigal's and Gieber's findings about newspapers: The network newscasts' lead stories often focused on the preservers of the status quo rather than on the changers. Luttbeg (1983) discovered little consensus among newspaper editors about the day's important news. The top stories of the day tended to be a function of where the reader lived. The consensus among editors appeared instead to be in the importance of proximity in determining the "play" of a story. Arterton (1984) concluded that a political campaign gained perceived importance as the number of reporters covering it increased. There was a snowball effect as well: The more reporters assigned to the campaign, the more leverage the campaign had in influencing the range of stories reported about it.

The construct of news as a product of the decisions made by newsgatherers, and the pressures brought to bear from various sources on those decisions, assumes by tautology that news is a commodity manufactured by newsgatherers. By focusing on how news is gathered, the social responsibility model of criticism leaves no "room" for the notion of news as a process of meaning creation that involves the reader. The methodologies for studying the construction of news by newsgatherers generally require expert training and access to or intimate familiarity with the newsgathering

process. Further, focusing the critique only on the pro-
ducers of news shelters a process that is entirely inter-
reactive from critique by a majority of the participants in
that process, the readers.

Focusing on standards for news media performance
presents a similar problem of narrowing for social respon-
sibility advocates. Janowitz's (1975) advocacy of the
gatekeeper model provides an example. Merely acknowledging
the polluting effect of institutional pressures, personal
limitations and deadlines on his standard of heightened ob-
jectivity through scientific method is useless. A standard
that cannot accommodate factors that are endemic to the
process for which that standard is being established
renders the standard powerless and meaningless.

If establishing the newsgatherer and the newsgather-
ing process as the subject of critique presents fatal prob-
lems, establishing the newsgatherer as critic is likewise
mortal. Merrill (1974) takes great pains to differentiate
between the social responsibility and libertarian models.
But the object of both is the same: a well-trained moral
actor using free will to establish a principle for his or
her actions. While the realization of that moral actor
would help eliminate the baseless, post-facto critique, it
would both ignore the role of the reader and eliminate the
possibility of sanction for transgression. With those
flaws, Merrill's distinction between teleological and
ontological models becomes meaningless.

Content and context

The social responsibility critical model treats the
manifest content of news as the product of a process rather
than as the location and starting point for a process of
meaning creation. The evidence for such a construct be-
comes obvious in the prescriptions for news media offered
by social responsibility-based critiques. The Hutchins
Commission's recommendations are one example. The emphasis
of the language of each recommendation is on the product
that will result from its implementation rather than on the
process that seeks to produce it. Similarly, in their
seminal work on the four theories of the press, Rivers and
Schramm (1969) seek evidence of truth, fairness and ac-
curacy in the content of news stories--specifically,
coverage of the 1967 riots in the Los Angeles district of
Watts--rather than in the process of gathering and writing
those stories. In their survey of how newspaper ombudsmen
perceive their role, Ettema and Glasser (1987) note that
the ombudsman's job is to review the manifest content that
results from the news process, after publication and usual-
ly only when asked to intervene by a reader. The ombudsman
then occasionally backtracks from the manifest content to
determine how the story was reported and written. Dennis
and Rivers (1974) bring a similar manifest content approach
to their analysis of the so-called New Journalism. They
analyze the features and characteristics of new journal-
istic works, offering examples of those works. By

contrast, Wolfe (1973) focuses on journalists' own doubts about the newsgathering and writing process that led to the New Journalism.

Evidence of the focus of social responsibility on the context of a particular work--including the event from which it arose and the organizational and personal decision-making that resulted in it--is spottier. Social responsibility-based critiques of the process of newsgathering are plentiful, but studies that offer a detailed treatment of how the context of an event and the context of production of a story are reflected in the language and organization of the story are rarer. Nearly thirty years ago, Gieber (1964) cautioned that we will not understand what news is until we better understand the social forces that bear on the reporting of it. Gieber's matter-of-fact bifurcation of process and content and the revelatory tone of his conclusion show how fundamental the notion of news-as-product had become to the social responsibility model.

The almost "natural" bifurcation of context and content in the social responsibility model is an obvious problem. But by limiting contextual considerations to events and newsgatherers the model also limits the possibility of conceiving of news as a process of meaning creation. When newsgatherers and events are the only context imagined to be relevant, the reader will be excluded from the notion of

news as creation of meaning. The sole creator of meaning
will be the news producer.

The reader

Social responsibility models frequently assume--
sometimes quite correctly--that entrusting critique to the
audience results in what I have earlier called post facto,
special-interest ax-grinding. The critics become a few vo-
cal, self-annointed but nonrepresentative standard bearers,
while the mass audience itself wallows in apathy (Lemert,
1989). Critique based in evangelical religious movements
is perhaps the most often cited example.

Historically, social responsibility models have bet-
ter accommodated the notion of reader-as-critic. While
identifying the duties of journalists, Lippmann (1920) also
named tasks for their readers. The audience's job,
Lippmann says, is to organize knowledge, learn analysis,
discriminate between fact and fantasy, transcend limited
experience and limiting prejudice with those facts, over-
come apathy, and eschew the curious but trivial for the
dull but important. How the audience is to achieve all
that is another matter. Schramm and White (1949) offered
one of the early examinations of whether and how audiences
followed Lippmann's prescription. They found that older,
better educated, wealthier newspaper readers read
editorials avidly, but that they read what they agreed
with. Strategies for newspaper reading appeared to be
divided between the so-called reality and pleasure

principles. Immediate-reward stories were those that pro-
vided drive reduction or vicarious experience. Delayed-
reward stories offered readers threat value or gave them
general preparedness for reality. In either strategy, the
authors found, the ease with which readers identified with
a story was influential in their story selection. Educa-
tion made more difference in women's reading patterns; eco-
nomic status made more difference in men's.

By 1960, however, some discussions of news media
criticism had turned away from the audience. Jensen's
(1960) argument for locating critique in the journalism
schools offered a distinctly institutional perspective.
The critical criteria should include objectivity, a regard
for the influence of political, social and cultural forces
in the historical development of news media, and the con-
textual relationship of mass media to their environment.
The audience is not identified specifically as an area of
focus or as an appropriate critical actor.

The eschewing of the audience by social responsibil-
ity critics may be waning. Lowenstein and Merrill argue
that "there is no reason to believe that informed, in-
telligent, helpful criticism and evaluation cannot come
from persons who themselves are not part of any of the mass
media" (1990, p. 130). Schramm (1983) apparently envisions
the reader in proposing general model of communication as a
transactional relationship in which both parties are active
instead of as a process whereby messages are prepared and

transmitted to an audience. Schramm's model appears to be compatible with one current model of mass communication, uses and gratifications, but it appears to reject another, agenda-setting.

Advocates of the social responsibility model still assume more often than not that the appropriate critical actors are professional journalists or academics. By focusing critique on the news producers and their "product," and by locating it for the most part in academic or professional circles, the social responsibility model narrows the definition of critique, its appropriate subject matter and its critical actors. It limits the possibility of understanding news as a transactional process whereby meaning is created. It also severely limits the possibility of effective sanction.

Critical Theory/Cultural Studies

The newsgatherer

Because much of the critical theory/cultural studies critical perspective is based on the Marxist notion of mass media as purveyors and reinforcers of false consciousness, the critical theory/cultural studies critique is usually located in academe. This fundamental assumption of the model results in the appropriateness of the academic critique frequently being assumed rather than argued: Newsgatherers are constrained by economic necessity or the policies of their organization's owners from conducting effective criticism of themselves and their product; audiences,

because they are immersed in false consciousness, cannot see from the perspective that is required.

Smith's (1973) conclusion about news broadcasters is representative of the critical theory/cultural studies view of all newsgatherers. He found that broadcasters are dominated by their collective assumptions about their audiences, but that the institution defined the characteristics of the audience that were important to it, so the audience is seen through a haze of those professional and institutional assumptions. Gans (1980) extended that notion to the news that is produced: It assumes that audiences share the values implied in news stories, and so news is often about the violation of those values. To Smith, because broadcasting is conceived of as a product for a mass audience, it abandons one of the salient ethics of 20th-century culture--individual artistic and informational freedom. Instead, broadcasting takes place on a territory of enforced neutrality.

Lazere (1987) summarizes the reasons underlying the newsgatherers' view of their readers. Capitalism requires the colonization of leisure time, the production of mindless news-as-entertainment to keep the masses diverted from a critical political consciousness, he says. But the motivation for that process is more profit than ideology. To Jencks (1987), the profit motive forces journalists to give readers what the journalists think they want instead of what they need. The often-cited argument that audiences

prefer reruns of "I Love Lucy" to news ignores that they are often embarrassed to admit that. In other words, people regard the impulse to be educated as nobler than the impulse to be entertained.

Drier (1987) sees newsgathering itself as the product of organizational needs and habits. Perhaps inevitably, journalists report differing views, but only those that are well within the establishment. Gitlin (1981) describes news stories as artifacts produced by professionals under the direction of elites. That structure eliminates the possibility of meaningful critique by journalists. To Stephens (1988), journalists who strive for objectivity obscure the essence of conflict even from themselves. They also sacrifice a powerful weapon in the search for understanding--an acknowledged, above-board point of view. Altheide (1976) detailed how the needs of news organizations affected the news. He identified a "news perspective" (p. 98) that is influenced by commercialism, political pressure, scheduling demands, technology and competition from other news media. Events become news when transformed by the news perspective, not because of objective characteristics of the events. The news perspective results in an organization of the news that encourages a process that is itself complex but has the effect of simplifying events. An organization's or a medium's news practices can significantly alter one event by predefining what is most important about it or by retrospectively

connecting it to other events. The journalist is not the actor who can or would be willing to dismantle the news perspective and expose its effects, because the same news perspective works to provide the journalist with moral justification in the form of job security, collegial praise and journalistic rewards.

Paletz, Reichert and McIntyre (1971) recognize a direct effect of the journalist's professional norms on newsgathering. Those norms tend to reinforce the authority of local governing bodies. For example, because reporters' everyday sources are likely to be in law enforcement and municipal government, local media are more likely to present civil disorders from the perspective of those officials. The reporter's concept of professionalism might also lead him or her to write in ways conducive to supporting local authority. The tone and format of the customary news story work to create a psychological distance between the reader and the authority being reported on. The authors speculated that that might work to heighten the potency of the authority. News story formats also rationalize time, and thereby help decrease the reader's anxiety. Readers can expect to see stories about certain events regularly, reported similarly. That regularity invests the stories with coherence and meaning. News stories might also provide symbolic reassurance by creating the impression of a flow of symbolically reassuring actions from government to the public. The news selection criterion

that requires that the story with the greatest interest to
the reader be reported might result in the image of a high-
ly authoritative, responsive governing body.

Institutional pressures, organizational needs and
self-serving moral justification by newsgatherers are not
the only reasons that the critical theory/cultural studies
models do not acknowledge the newsgatherer as critic. To
Powell (1987), news is becoming monolithic. The diversity
of voices required for effective critical dialogue is dis-
appearing. By 1987, for example, 167 newspaper chains
owned more than half the daily newspapers in the United
States, representing more than 70 percent of the total dai-
ly circulation.

But many critical theory/cultural studies critics do
identify the newsgatherer as a crucial focus of critique.
Smythe and Van Dinh (1983) identify three areas on which
critical studies should focus. The first, the internation-
al level, includes the Third World, governmental policies,
and multi-national corporations. The second, the national
level, includes the political economy of new technology.
The third, the community-neighborhood level, includes the
involvement of people in achieving understanding of and
resistance to imposed communication systems. The authors
also identify one of the overall goals of critical research
as the decentralization of control of communications. That
goal, and the focus on multi-national corporations and

political economy, implies the centrality of the newsgath-
erers/producers as subjects of critique.

The focus on the newsgatherers/producers is by no
means a theoretical tenet of the critical theory/cultural
studies model. Smythe and Van Dinh identify the reader at
the community-neighborhood level. At least as important is
the model's recognition of the possibility of the reader as
the appropriate critic. That recognition is apparent in
Hall's (1977) concept of dominant, negotiated and opposi-
tional readings of news in a process of critical dialectic
with the hegemonic mass news media. It also is manifested
in Fiske's (1987a, 1987b) treatment of the common-sense
discourse used by television audiences to conduct the kind
of dialectic Hall identified.

The possibility acknowledged by Hall, Gitlin and
Fiske of the audience as critical actor carries with it at
least a tacit rejection of the expertise implied in much of
the critical theory/cultural studies critical literature.
That is a hopeful sign for the proposed model, which
similarly posits audience-as-critic. The critical theory/
cultural studies manifest inclination to address all
aspects of the mass communication process as appropriate
for critique is likewise useful. What the model does not
provide is an alternative to the expert discourse that can
be systematically used to conduct the broad critique the
model calls for.

Content and context

The critical theory/cultural studies model shares
with the Marxist and poststructuralist models the fundamen-
tal notion that manifest content cannot be made meaningful
independent of the manifest context from which it arose.
Whether the context supplied by the reader is also crucial
is a matter of some debate. Grossberg (1987), for example,
calls for an emphasis on the concept of difference. In the
case of news stories, difference would embrace how a report
on a particular event could have been different. The
difference-based critique would examine the observations
and information that the newsgatherer could have included
but did not, and the reporter's choice of story model or
narrative framework. The difference notion is based in
Popper's (1957) observation about history: that it is con-
tingent and not necessary, that outcomes of particular his-
torical events are never guaranteed in advance. For
Grossberg, critique necessarily involves the analysis of
how particular processes are inserted into and articulated
within complex contexts.

Similarly, Stephens (1988) looks at the manifest
content of news not as the object of critique but for evi-
dence of the impact of the various methods by which news is
gathered and disseminated. An example of the interplay be-
tween content and context was mentioned previously: The so-
cial responsibility-based standard of objectivity is often
compromised by the narrative framework chosen for the news

story. As Manoff (cited in Stephens, 1988) argues, narra-
tive form is not dictated by the event. News is located
where events and texts intersect. Events create the story,
but the story likewise creates the event.

Critical theory/cultural studies models often share
similar conceptions of the role of mass media in a culture.
Carey's (1974) construct is representative. To Carey, cul-
ture does not exist except in communication. He defines
culture as the organization of social experience in the
consciousness of human beings, manifested in symbolic ac-
tion. Journalism is a particular symbolic form, and a
highly particular organization of social experience. The
importance of the manifest content of news in Carey's con-
struct is obvious, but only as representative of the con-
text of social experience from which it arose. It cannot
be considered independently of that social context.

Much of the critical theory/cultural studies ap-
proach arose in reaction to the perceived inadequacies of
empirical and social responsibility-based critiques. In
its treatment of the manifest content of news as object of
critique, the model does apprehend the fundamental nature
of context. But it also shares a shortcoming of many
social-responsibility and empirical critiques: It does not
make clear the notion of the reader as critical actor and
active participant in the process of meaning creation. The
contexts with which the model concerns itself are events

that triggered the news story and the choices made by
newsgatherers in reporting it.

The reader

Golding and Murdock (1978) offer a general prescrip-
tion for critical theory/cultural studies that appears to
place the focus of critique on the mass media audience.
They argue that the important question in inquiries into
mass communication is not what to study, but how. What is
needed as a guiding theoretical principle is not a theory
of mass communication but a theory of society. Hardt
(1979) agrees. The empirical methodology supplies only a
scientific context for the interpretation of communication
phenomena, he says. What is needed is a comprehensive
theory of society. News must be thought of as both a form
of knowledge and a commodity. That conception implies a
relationship in which the reader is a crucial actor. Carey
(1983) defines cultural studies as an attempt to think
through a theory or vocabulary of communications that is
simultaneously a theory or vocabulary of culture. Because
the reader helps name the cultural vocabulary, the reader
becomes a participant in the critique, perhaps the key
critical actor. To Williams (1973), naming the study of
communications the study of mass communications ignored the
reader as critical focus and actor, and had a devastating,
deforming effect on the discipline. Grossberg (1987)
likewise sees mass communication as essentially an individ-
ual, audience-based process of critique and meaning

construction. In Grossberg's model, the reader uses the notion of difference to acknowledge and emphasize the contingent nature of events and their reporting, and so to deconstruct them. Critical work is located in the dialectic between deconstruction and reconstruction. Smythe and Van Dinh (1983) identify the community-neighborhood level as one of the three levels on which critical research should focus. Critical work at the community-neighborhood level would involve examining how people understand and resist imposed communication systems.

Hawkins and Pingree (1983) suggest a critical theory/cultural studies approach that posits audiences as the focus of critique rather than as critical actors. There is evidence, the authors say, that television viewing causes viewers to construct a social reality in a certain way. But that construction might also direct viewing behavior. The authors argue that most research designs are inadequate to the task of determining how that audience uses television because those designs measure difference, while the impact of television might be in reinforcing the status quo.

Allen (1987) achieves a cultural studies approach to television criticism by arguing that reader-oriented approaches to literature are appropriate to the investigation of how viewers "read" television shows and the impact of television upon them. Reader-oriented approaches reject texts as capable of carrying meaning independent of a

reader. Allen offers examples from soap operas, commercials and news broadcasts to show that television uses techniques that include direct address and the blurring of the distinction between addresser and addressee to invite the viewer to participate in the process of meaning creation:

> The movement in reader-oriented criticism away from the notion of a stable and eternal text to that of activations of texts within historically specific conditions of reception is accelerated by the very nature of television....The public or social dimensions of television 'reading' are undeniable. (1987b, pp. 107-108)

Fiske argues that the emphasis of the term "cultural" in cultural studies is political, and that cultural studies is the inquiry into "a way of living within an industrial society that encompasses all the meanings of that social experience" (1987b, p. 254). Culture may become a site of constant struggle between the powerful and the powerless. As part of that struggle, readers critique mass media in a transactional process of creation of meaning. Fiske uses television programs, including "Magnum P.I.," "The A Team," and a music video by the rock star Madonna to argue that viewers, even children, use television to locate themselves in their culture. Fiske cites Hall's constructs of dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings of the television "texts" to describe how viewers complete that process of cultural location. "Cultural studies," Fiske says, "sees

the television experience as a constant dynamic movement between similarity and difference" (1987, p. 269).

The principal potential problem with the critical theory/cultural studies model is lack of rigor. If shared standards for evaluation exist among readers, they are likely not to be articulated in the critical process. Instead, they likely will have to be derived by those who look meta-critically at the reader's own critical text. Even when those standards can be identified, their usefulness to a particular reader in locating himself or herself in a culture does not imply that the standards will be universalizable. What is needed is a common, universalizable teleology.

Marxism

The newsgatherer

Mosco and Herman (1981) characterize the focus of the Marxist critique of production of news and the work of the newsgatherer. To them, understanding the shape and direction of contemporary capitalism requires an acknowledgement of the growing significance of information resources. A communication revolution is afoot, shaped by regional and class struggles, by powerful capitalist forces molding that revolution to meet their own accumulation and legitimacy needs, and by noncapitalist forces resisting the capitalist hegemony and using information resources to build a new social order. While the newsgatherer is an obvious and necessary focus of such a critical model, the

model's conception of the role of that newsgatherer
eliminates him or her as critic.

To Schiller (1983a), the Marxist critique should
focus on the production side of communications. The
restructuring of capitalism from an industrial to a service
base has co-opted communication. Information has been
transformed from a social good to a private, commercial
commodity (1983c). Large business enterprises in the
United States are consorting to change the nature of public
information, and the communication technology that has al-
lowed capitalism to appropriate that information is running
amok. It has been conceived, designed, built and installed
with the objective of maintaining economic privilege and
preventing the kind of social change that would overturn
and eliminate privilege. The newsgatherer, then, becomes
useless as critic, no matter whether he or she sees himself
or herself as free, will-driven moral agent or as possessor
of a social role in a particular culture. Worse, say the
Marxists, because each society attempts--partially through
the mass media--to present its form of social life as a
natural necessity (D'Amico, 1981), journalists are fre-
quently unaware of their own role. They are duped by the
same false consciousness that they help to perpetuate.

In a Marxist approach that predated his cultural
studies framework, Gitlin (1980) outlined the way that
false consciousness manifests itself in the newsgathering
process. It results primarily in what Gitlin called media

frames--persistent patterns of cognitions, interpretations and presentation, or selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. Media frames not only convey the false consciousness required by ruling elites; they also system-atically exclude certain groups from news coverage. Political movements, for example, become newsworthy only by submitting to the implicit rules of newsmaking, by confor-ming to journalistic notions of what news is, and thereby acquiescing to manipulation by the purveyors of false con-sciousness.

To Cockburn (1986), the problem of criticism for newsgatherers--as for everyone else in a culture--is not only lack of awareness because of the impact of false con-sciousness. It is also a problem of power. The press it-self is a corporate power, practically immune from damage by criticism, and deliberately unresponsive to the needs of groups that might threaten it. But the press itself opera-tes at the whim of the ruling elites. It is adversarial only when it is allowed to be, reporting divisions already acknowledged by the society and by the governing elites. The reporting of conflict results from permission granted by the ruling elite, not from pressure brought to bear by audiences, the disenfranchised, or the ideologically aware.

The essential problem with the Marxist model--at least to the proposed model--is that, in its identification of false consciousness as the key dynamic in capitalist

mass communication, the Marxist model eliminates the pos-
sibility not only of a newsgatherer-generated critique but
also of the reader as critic. The only way to escape the
trap of false consciousness is through training in an ex-
pert discourse that recognizes false consciousness for what
it is. The model acknowledges the necessity of freeing
oneself from the dominant ideology, but doing so is an in-
dividual process of enlightenment. Because of the require-
ments of the dominant capitalist ideology, critique-induced
change from within news media that would result in the ex-
posure of false consciousness is not possible. Instead, a
meaningful restructuring of the mass news media can be
brought about only by externally-driven revolutionary
change.

Content and context

The Marxist model recognizes texts as particular
cultural forms, but those forms have a dual role. They ex-
ist both as reports on and as manifestations of the pro-
cesses of an entire culture. Context is fundamental. To
Levi-Strauss (1979), individual conduct presumably includ-
ing the newsgatherer's process of generating news reports--
cannot stand by itself as symbolic. Individual symbolic
conduct comprises one element of which a collective sym-
bolic system is constituted. Social theory, of which news
stories can be thought to be one manifestation, aims to
reduce diverse appearances of social life to convey the
belief that all cultures share universal structures. These

unconscious universal structures determine the details of cultural forms and are investigated as collective manifestations of meaning. In a capitalist system, the notion of universal cultural forms would be used to convey legitimacy on the system. The apparent universality of the cultural forms would be proposed as proof that they were not contingent but existed inevitably, and resulted "naturally" in the dominant system.

D'Amico (1981) recognizes the cultural forms generated by unconscious universal structures as Marx's social hieroglyphic. For Marx, that social hieroglyphic is the point of critique. Manifest content should be searched to reveal the underlying ideology of the manifest context that generated the content. To Baudrillard (cited in D'Amico, 1981), understanding the use of symbols is critical in exposing and demystifying that underlying ideology. Again, content becomes a means to discover context. Context remains the focus of critique.

The Marxian construct of manifest content as a cultural form or social hieroglyphic that serves ideology leads to the notion that analyzing that content can also expose ideology. But the Marxian process of analysis--a sort of layer-by-layer "peeling away" that will expose first context and eventually ideology--results in the likelihood that multiple layers of analysis will yield multiple, and sometimes conflicting, layers of meaning. The possibility arises of conflicting interpretations from

level to level, and even within levels. Perhaps more importantly, the problem arises of where and even whether it is possible to establish limits for the critique.

The reader

When the Marxist model focuses on the reader, the concern is with how the reader processes news to create meaning, and how that process perpetuates and serves false consciousness. Despite the model's presentation of the news media's role in the creation and maintenance of false consciousness, certain post-Marxist critics argue that readers are often themselves aware that they use mass media in a certain way. Gitlin (1987) offers a model, outlined in Chapter 2, of how audiences use television to oppose hegemony, and of how social groups use television to define their status and identify and position themselves in a society. The crisis of rising expectations in emerging societies and among emerging subcultures and minorities within a society is cited by some critics as evidence of such attempts by viewers to position themselves.

Gitlin's model obviously encompasses the producers of news and their product, but his emphasis is on its impact, and the impact is on the reader. Piepe, Crouch and Emerson (1978) found little evidence that audiences are aware of how hegemonous mass media work on them. The authors found that people tend to use mass media in ways that reinforce and reify class boundaries. Class conflicts are influenced by and influence patterns of media use.

The notion of hegemony implies that readers possess a limited realization of how they function as critical actors. Mosco and Herman (1981) offer a different, although more global, conception. For them, there is a communication revolution afoot, shaped by regional and class struggles, by powerful capitalist forces molding that revolution to meet accumulation and legitimacy needs, but also by noncapitalist forces resisting the hegemony and using information resources to build a new social order. The evolution of the acknowledgement of information resources as an arena for class struggle indicates at least some awareness on the part of some members of the mass media audience of the notion of false consciousness, and their oppositional readings of it. For Gitlin and Hall (1977), the practice by audiences of oppositional or negotiated readings constitutes the reader-conducted critique.

For Habermas (1979), the roots of that critique are in Aristotle's notion of the virtuous life. The rise of modern science transferred the responsibility for critique from the people to the realm of scientifically grounded social theory, so that the individually centered challenge of the virtuous life became the technical-administrative problem of regulating social intercourse to ensure the order and well-being of the state. In that transition, says Habermas, direct access to a critical practice that led to individual concern with virtuous conduct was replaced by

the notion that critique--as manifested in the study of what was good for society--required scientific expertise.

A number of Marxist critics cannot overcome the notion of false consciousness to allow a reader-conducted critique. To them, false consciousness is too pervasive and insidious to be recognizable to the reader, and the reader cannot accomplish the liberating critique when he or she is constrained by false consciousness. Breaking out of the cycle requires the expert discourse described by Grossberg (1987) of struggle, dialectic and empowerment. Even the notion of dominant, negotiated or oppositional readings operates in an overall context of powerlessness in the face of the demands of the dominant ideology.

Empiricism

The newsgatherer

Lazarsfeld (1948) set the approach if not the agenda for much of the empirically modeled criticism that has been attempted since. The quantitative inquiries that he proposed included an investigation into the crusades that news organizations and newsgatherers conduct. He also proposed a look at how mass media criticize each other. In other words, Lazarsfeld envisioned a critique conducted by academics that focused in part on the newsgatherers and their processes. Apparent differences of opinion over the appropriate focus of mass media criticism--newsgatherer, product or audience--have characterized empirical models of criticism since. But as Weaver and Gray (1980) point out,

few research programs have focused on the sources of jour-
nalists' professional values and the role of those values
in determining what is news. Chaffee (1980), responding to
Weaver and Gray, argues that mass communication research as
a discipline is shifting from a persuasional paradigm em-
phasizing the effects of mass media (and therefore presum-
ably focusing on the audience) to a journalistic paradigm
focusing on information.

Despite Weaver's and Gray's conclusion, there is
evidence in the literature of attempts to focus critically
on the impact of the newsgatherer on the news, and to
quantify it. De Sola Pool and Shulman (1964) found that
news was written in terms of the newswriter's conception of
his or her audience, which originates in the temperament of
the writer and his or her immediate social environment.
They found that communicators may have several different
audiences in mind, and that the communicators' selection of
and emphasis on material are determined in part by the pic-
tures they have in their heads of their audience. Thus,
good news tended to elicit images of supportive readers,
bad news conjured critics. Where the newsgatherers' images
were congruent with the kind of news they were reporting,
the reporting was more accurate than when the images were
incongruent. Good news also tended to be more accurately
reported than bad.

Molotch and Lester (1974) found that news content
was a result of purposive, creative activities by news

promoters, news assemblers and news consumers. They
reported a typology of events: routines, accidents,
scandals and serendipity. Each type reveals different
kinds of information about how society is organized, and
each holds challenges to those who have or lack power.
Routine and serendipitous events usually involve the crea-
tion of reality because they are constituted by those who
hold power. Flegel and Chaffee (1971) found that reporters
are strongly directed by their own opinions and recommenda-
tions in their stories, and are willing to admit and de-
scribe to others those patterns of influence. The views of
editors and readers were seen to be much less influential.

Graber (1988), while focusing on how audiences pro-
cessed news stories, found that that processing was
influenced in part by salience cues provided by
newsgatherers or presenters. Gaziano and McGrath (1987)
found that the credibility readers attach to the news they
receive may be directly affected by the journalist's iden-
tification with the communities he or she serves. Burgoon,
Burgoon, Buller and Atkin (1987) found that journalists
were split on whether it was appropriate for journalists to
belong to community organizations, that that involvement
was low, and that younger beat reporters tend to have the
least involvement in the community. Weaver and Wilhoit
(1986) gathered demographic data on American newsgatherers
that showed considerable diversity among them, but a pre-
ponderance of young, white journalism graduates.

Bantz, McCorkle and Baade (1980) took a more qualitative look at local television news organizations, but their research showed a factory model of newsgathering consisting of identifiable components that yielded four observable consequences: inflexibility, the lack of personal investment in the news product, evaluation of work in terms of productivity, and a mismatch between the expectations new reporters brought to their jobs and the reality of the news factory. Blumler and Gurevitch (1981) concluded that newsgathering procedures in political reporting give a privileged position to the views of established power holders, that leading politicians get their exposure almost entirely through formats devised and controlled by journalists, and that audience needs may be considered secondary to organizational needs.

McLeod and Blumler (1987) argue for a broader approach by empiricists that might more readily align them with critique, or at least with other models that have been taken to concern themselves more with critique. The authors argue that scientific criteria are as applicable to macrosocial theory and research as to any other level of inquiry. What is required for empiricists is a release from dominant, imprisoning intellectual frameworks. Such a broader empirical inquiry would help eliminate what the authors identify as problems in macrosocial inquiry: polemics, the lack of closure in holistic approaches, and a universalist approach that discounts scientifically organized

efforts. The authors argue that the systematic character of mass media systems allows a more quantitative approach and at the same time an emphasis on the search for conflict.

Hirsch (1980) proposes a similar broadening of empirical inquiry by suggesting a macro-level theoretical framework that emphasizes the organizational context of mass media. Obviously, the appropriate focus of that inquiry would be the news-gatherers and their organizations.

Lowery and DeFleur (1983) likewise suggest a broadening of inquiry, but their emphasis is more individual than organizational, and it acknowledges the influence of literary critical theory. The authors point out the potential impact of meaning theory on the investigation of mass media. Mass media can be seen as providers of meaning and interpreters of reality for their audiences, the authors argue. The language newsgatherers use may have a profound influence on the way audiences perceive, experience and act upon their physical and social world. Mass media play a significant role in shaping and stabilizing the meanings we experience for the symbols of our language. Thus, how journalists decide on the language they use to report a story should become a crucial focus of the empirical critique.

Gitlin (1980) summarizes the most often heard criticism of the empirical model, especially as it attempts a critique of mass media. Empiricism seeks hard data instead

of hard questions, Gitlin argues. The empirical model may have been appropriate for conducting the kind of research sought by the news organizations that funded much of the early efforts in the discipline. But what evolved as the dominant sociology of mass communication research was unable to grasp the fundamental features of its subject. Empiricism was unequal to what should have been the real task of mass communication research--the effect of mass media on their audiences. If Gitlin is to be believed, the empirical critical model offers limited help to a model of criticism that is both focused on the reader and posits the reader as appropriate critic. But if the focus of the critique is to be more comprehensive, as Lowery and DeFleur, Hirsch, and McLeod and Blumler suggest it can be, then the model might be helpful.

What is more problematic is the feature that, ironically, empiricism shares in part with Marxism. Empiricism requires an expert discourse, specialized training in research methods and often specialized tools for data analysis. Thus it requires an academic locus. A reader-conducted critique based on the empirical model might well be impossible. An empirical critique located in either audience or newsgatherer would also violate a premise of empirical methodology--scientific detachment. As participants in the mass communication process, newsgatherers and audiences by definition cannot possess that scientific detachment.

Content and Context

The empirical model views both manifest content and manifest context as sources of data. Each becomes the potential location for bits of evidence of roughly equal weight that will either confirm or falsify a particular hypothetical "link" between content and context. The focus of studies is often the "fit" between sources and events and the manifest content of the news stories that are produced. The focus of the critique, then, becomes how mediation by news producers affects manifest content.

Frequently, empirical critique focuses on manifest content for evidence of the contextual influence of news producers because methodologies for gathering and analyzing content-based data are considered more reliable. The primary tool of the empirical critic focusing on manifest content is content analysis. For the critic who focuses on the newsgatherer, source or event, data collection becomes more problematic. Often, it is based on self-report by the participants. When that is the option, the empiricist critic often chooses to consider manifest content as indirect but more reliable evidence.

The empirical model is essentially a methodological approach that often combines with a particular theoretical basis for criticism. Examples of critiques based in different theoretical models but which share the empirical methodology include Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade (1980),

Epstein (1973), Lemert (1981, 1989), Molotch and Lester (1974), Phillips (1977) and Tuchman (1978).

The empirical model is most helpful when it succeeds in revealing what its methodologies apparently have the most trouble revealing--how diverse elements of context work to constitute the process of mediation that results in the manifest content of a news story. Lazarsfeld (1948) recognized the importance of context early on. His recommended topics for a systematic study of mass media criticism included the relationship between mass media and the social system out of which they arise. When the empirical model limits its focus to manifest content its data -gathering methodologies are considered more reliable and appropriate to the data at hand. Content analysis is the obvious example. But limiting the focus of the critical inquiry in that way results in isolating the manifest content from its context, and the model then relies on data generated from other sources to create its own context for evaluation.

The reader

Weaver and Gray (1980) noted the trend in mass communication research toward a concern for the effects of mass media on the political, intellectual and cultural life of modern society, a concern that Lazarsfeld (1948) initially called for. Between Lazarsfeld and Weaver and Gray, numerous other proponents of the empirical model have

acknowledged, at least tacitly, the importance of the reader as a focus of the critique of mass news media.

But the empirical model as it applies to critique sees limited usefulness for the empirical methodology to nonexpert critics, including audiences. Indeed, Weaver and Gray (1980) themselves attribute the improvement in mass communication research to a shift in the composition of mass communications faculties from descriptive historical scholars to behavioral scientists and then to communication scholars produced by colleges of mass communication.

Occasionally, the double concerns of audience-as-focus and audience-as-critical-actor mingle in empirical research. Graber (1988), for example, concluded that people tame the so-called tide of information from mass media quite well, adopting workable if intellectually vulnerable ways of paring the flood of news to manageable proportions. De Sola Pool (1983) acknowledged the need for empiricists to focus on how new technologies of communication work to splinter audiences and affect their motivation to seek knowledge, their styles of search, knowledge gain, creativity in learning, and interaction with each other. Findahl and Hoijer (1981) concluded that broadcast news audiences engage in a process of comprehension that occurs at different levels. The first involves sorting important bits of information and ordering them hierarchically. The second consists of reducing and condensing them into a form of "inner language." But even these examples emphasize the

apparent absence of empirical methodology from the aud-
ience's critical strategy.

Obviously, the expert methodology of the empirical
model leaves little "room" for the reader as critic. Even
if systematic data gathering is within the grasp of un-
trained audiences, methods of data processing and analysis
that are sufficiently sophisticated and powerful to meet
the standards of the empirical methodology are beyond the
intuitive grasp and physical resources of the reader.

LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE PROPOSED MODEL

Introduction

Models of literary criticism provide examples of
questions addressed in a formal critical approach, and the
methodologies for addressing those questions. The ques-
tions address the role of the author or producer of the
text, the nature of the relationship between text and con-
text, and the role of the reader. But implicit in all
those questions and approaches is their emphasis on the
awareness of the non-inevitability of the story that
results from the event. That assumption leads to the use
of techniques such as close reading, semiologic analysis
and deconstruction to remove the work from its context so
that the symbols, myths and formats it employs can be iden-
tified. The proposed model borrows from a reader-oriented
model of literary criticism that posits a process of
deconstruction-reconstruction by the reader as fundamental
to the process of meaning creation that is reading.

Literary critical models recognize the works of mass
news media as artifacts, products of our consciousness, in
much the same way that other literature is apprehended.
That notion is key to a model that proposes the audience as

critic. The notion consists of recognizing news as com-
posed of a series of images, instead of literalizing those
images into pictures. By doing that, the reader-critic is
able to use the image in the way the mass news media do, as
a particular way of seeing through the object to which the
focus is applied. An analogy is the Aristotelian notion of
poetry as presenting rather than representing the world.

The importance of metaphor is also acknowledged.
Lakoff (1987) identifies the dominant structure of cogni-
tive categories in readers as radial--based on experience--
rather than contiguous--based on logic. Lakoff says that
typology of categorization means that metaphor is dominant
and universal as a strategy for knowing the world. The ap-
proach to news as images rather than as representation
places the emphasis on news as metaphoric, and on myth as
the dominant metaphor of news. Examples of questions ad-
dressed by such an approach include: Is the story-as-
artifactual-image acknowledged by the news producer? Does
it purport to present rather than to represent the world?
Does that presentation "work" for the reader?

The Moral Groundwork

The moral imperative for the deconstructive critical
model lies in the task deconstruction has set itself.
Anderson (1989) characterizes that task in his definition
of deconstruction--an investigation of the nature and pro-
duction of knowledge. At the heart of that investigation,

says Bruns (1985), is the exposition of the problem of power and authority.

Therein lies acknowledgement of an audience-based morality. Evidence for that locus can be found elsewhere as well. For example, in the attack by Anderson (1989), Derrida (1978) and others on the impact of logocentrism and its insistence on meaning as positively present in language lies the affirmation that the moral locus is appropriately in the reader, because meaning is a process of creation engaged in by that reader.

Further evidence is in the theoretical basis for critique. Johnson (1981) identifies critique as that which exposes what the starting point of a theory conceals. To Barthes (1987), for example, criticism necessarily involves value judgments, and invoking objectivity and correspondence-based truth as critical standards masks the ideology of one's positions.

For Lefkovitz (1989), the job of criticism is the process of demystification. In that, he echoes Wittgenstein's (1953) and Edwards' (1982) model for the appropriate moral teleology: morality as a process of apprehending the world and locating ourselves appropriately in it rather than as an orientation that sees the world as an opportunity to exercise our will. Rabinowitz (1989) takes up that teleology in arguing for an audience-based process of "reading" that allows for multiple--but not infinite--responses instead of one "right" one. The moral

framework for such a process is a rejection of the will-
determined universal principle. At the same time, it ack-
nowledges that training readers to doubt and to be skepti-
cal in their reading does itself constitute a form of
training according to moral and social codes.

To O'Hara (cited in Atkins, 1989), the deconstruc-
tive process eliminates "the elusive, purely theoretical
quest for the hidden rules governing the system of produc-
tion, dissemination and interpretation of texts . . .
(which) can lead only to the foolish practice of some
single, all-determining principle of critical practice"
(1989, p. 8).

As O'Hara makes apparent, the deconstructive ap-
proach carries the seeds of its own deconstruction. While
it may work as a theoretical and methodological orientation
for creating awareness of how theory and artifact both work
to conceal, it takes us only halfway. Its moral groundwork
provides us with a more reader-based approach to critique,
but we must look elsewhere for a basis for re-construction.

Models of Truth

The structuralist and poststructuralist models of
literary criticism see truth essentially as a product of
texts. Texts, in turn, are cultural artifacts that partic-
ipate in and express the values of the system from which
they emerge (Lefkovitz, 1989). Semiology--the study of how
signs become codes--focuses on how information is organized
so that communities achieve consensus about meaning.

Similarly, the semiotician ceases to define art as mimesis
--the representation of reality--and sees it as semeosis
instead--a process of recovering from a text the secondary,
deeper level of signification. Because reality is mediated
by signs, the critic's job is to use his or her textual
knowledge to identify the codes a writer invokes, or, as
Barthes (1987) puts it, to expose the literary conventions
that have come to look like truth. To Eco (1976), a sign
system is anything that can be used to lie.

Barthes (1972) is among literary critics who have
attempted to use the deconstructive approach to show that
mass news media texts should no longer be considered repre-
sentations of reality. Lefkovitz (1989) recognizes good
writers as reproducers of particular codes recognized and
shared by the culture. Stephens (1988) concludes that the
social responsibility model's ideal of objectivity is often
compromised by the narrative framework that the writer
adopts. The frameworks Stephens identifies include the
woeful or noble victim, the tearful relatives, and the
breakdown of societal values. Thus truth changes with the
rules of discourse. Often, it changes as well with the ad-
vent of technology. An example is Schudson's (1978) dis-
cussion of the evolution of newspaper truth as objectivity
(see Chapter 2). For Lefkovitz (1989), our use of language
creates the world and the people who populate it. Fish
(1980) argues that we read and interpret as communities,

and that those communities establish criteria for ap-
propriate readings through the rhetoric of persuasion.

The impact of literary criticism's approaches to
truth have begun to be seen in the literature of mass com-
munication research. Berger and Chaffee (1987), for exam-
ple, recognize a growing acknowledgment of communication as
a process of invention of meaning engaged in by newsgath-
erers and audiences rather than as the discovery of truth.
In that construct, the correspondence model of truth is
simply inappropriate. The role of deconstruction becomes
clearer. For Farrell (1987) deconstruction challenges the
assumption that true and reliable statements about social
life can be made. Deconstruction rejects the notion of the
logocentric, knowing subject as authority and finds ground-
less the stable subject-object relationship to truth. It
recognizes the role of myth as exposer and intentional dis-
torter (Barthes, 1972). Demystification, the role of
critique in deconstruction, becomes the search "not for
universal beauty and truth but to tell us how we've come to
see something as beautiful or true, and whose interest this
aesthetic has served" (Lefkovitz, 1989, p. 71). Obviously,
deconstructive inquiry does not share the bounds of other
approaches. To Foucault (1970), not even the human subject
is inevitable, but is the product of signifying systems.

Two problems are immediately apparent with the
deconstructive approach to truth. The first is technical:
The initial awareness of an alternative model of truth and

the adoption of a mechanism for recognizing it requires ex-
pertise. That expertise is academic, and an audience-as-
critic model of criticism would depend on initial training
of that audience to make deconstruction useful as a criti-
cal approach. But the possibility exists that a less ex-
pert but equally appropriate discourse is available to the
reader, and that that discourse can use the deconstructive
methodology.

The second problem is more fundamental. The work of
deconstruction inevitably leads to the question of what
would be reconstructed from it. It is obvious that the
deconstructive approach would leave us with a profound
redefinition of what news is and how it should function.
That problem is an appropriate subject for meta-critical
inquiry. A few notions suggest themselves. If texts are
cultural artifacts that participate in and express the
value system out of which they emerge, then the current
credibility crisis in mass news media may reflect the
reader's awareness of that. In a poststructuralist concept
newspapers might evolve as agents/catalysts rather than as
providers of "truth" and legitimizers of culture. Facts
become prompters of deconstructive readings that allow
readers to locate themselves in the culture. The
credibility crisis--or, put another way, reader skep-
ticism--becomes a goal rather than a problem.

The Newsgatherer as Critic

The deconstructive critical model applied to news media would argue for the impossibility of entrusting the critique to the newsgatherer. To make the analogy to literary criticism, the author may function as one source of the paratexts that help audiences illuminate the original text and create meaning from it. But because meaning is created by audiences from a text, the author cannot be isolated as the appropriate critic.

The newsgatherer is undeniably a part of the communication process, the producer of the artifact that is to be deconstructed. Atkins and Morrow (1989) acknowledge that we discover meaning partly in the process of writing, because intention doesn't precede language or writing; it occurs in and simultaneously with language. Barthes' (1987) conception may differ somewhat. Meaning is in structured patterns corresponding to conscious decisions by the author, he argues. But the impact of both conceptions is the same. If meaning is a process of creation involving author, text and reader, isolating one element as the appropriate or primary focus of the critique is impossible. Similarly, naming the author as appropriate critic denies the existence of either reader or meaning as a process of creation involving the reader.

Content and Context

Poststructuralist notions of the role of text and context arose partly in reaction to formalism in literary

criticism, the argument that the text is autonomous as an artifact and that form and style, not the relationship of the work to "life," should be pre-eminent. Anderson (1989) notes that deconstruction rejects a fundamental assumption of logocentrism, the insistence on meaning as positively present in language. Deconstruction also rejects the text as source of fixed meaning, as object of fixed knowledge and value (Cain, 1984). Isolating the text constitutes the arrogance of logocentrism (Said, 1977).

In the deconstruction model, the text exists as clue to context. Because reality is mediated by signs, the critic uses his or her textual knowledge to identify the codes the writer invokes (Lefkovitz, 1989). Communities that share a textual history--a history based on shared texts--reach consensus about meaning because they share the codes and conventions of expression. Thus meaning becomes intertextual; texts refer to each other, and texts exist as cultural artifacts that participate in and express the values of the system out of which they emerge. Signs take their meaning from their associative context, and communi-cation becomes a meaning-event constituted by signs and their shared interpretation (Farrell, 1987).

Because of the associative nature of meaning, the stable subject-object relationship to truth is exposed as being without foundation. For the deconstructionist, Farrell says, the reader-critic's task becomes replacing the quest for truth with the interpretation of meaning.

The deconstructionist accomplishes that by using a meth-
odology that is theoretically not unlike that of empir-
icism--taking the text out of context, even conducting a
systematic "misreading" of the text against the author's
apparent intention. Where deconstruction and empiricism
differ is in the former's theoretical emphasis on the fun-
damental nature of context, even as the text is being
removed from it. Text is removed from context to expose
context. The goal is not to illuminate the text itself but
to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of what it
represents.

An example of the deconstructive critical strategy
is Miller's (1988) treatment of television. His technique
is called close reading, which involves focusing on indi-
vidual symbols as units of analysis. The technique is not
automatically identified with deconstruction; advocates of
other critical models are known to use it as well, and some
deconstructionists shun it. For Miller, close reading ac-
complishes the removal of text from context to reveal the
insidious nature of symbols that together constitute the
seamless, narcissistic world of television. Thus, removing
manifest content from manifest context can serve to better
expose that context. Trew (1979) uses the technique of
discourse analysis to effect a deconstruction of newspaper
stories. For Trew, the resulting text-out-of-context anal-
ysis reveals comprehensive, well-articulated systems of

ideas in newspaper discourse that might affect readers'
perceptions of social matters.

The deconstructive strategy frequently assumes that
at the heart of texts is not truth but metaphor, in the
Aristotelian sense. Aristotelian metaphor serves the
reader as a resource for finding proportion. Deconstruc-
tion seeks to reveal metaphor by allowing the reader-critic
to see through the information conveyed. Lakoff's (1987)
contrasting of experiential and contiguous models of cogni-
tive categorization may be illustrative. Metaphor exists
not in texts but as a cognitive capacity in ourselves. But
the classical logocentric model of metaphor as a system of
logical representations may be invalid. Instead, metaphor
works experientially, presumably taking its represen-
tations from the shared context of culture rather than an
"innate" logic of categorization. If metaphoric associa-
tion is experiential, deconstruction might prove more use-
ful as a model for exposing those representations than
would a model that assumes a text constitutes a series of
logical, readily identifiable representations of context.

In some incarnations, the deconstructive techniques
for removing text from context are arguably expert in na-
ture. They might require an academic discourse and expert
training. But the deconstructive strategy still allows the
possibility of news being located on both sides of the
text--in the newsgathering process that produces the

textual artifact, and in the process of meaning creation engaged in by an active reader.

To be faithful to its purpose, deconstruction must act to expose all context. Therefore, properly done it is constantly in the act of deconstructing itself. As Anderson (1989) says, deconstruction works to understand the impossibility of ever getting it right in explaining what anything is. Obviously, that allows the possibility of declaring critique impossible. If communication is the process of creating meaning by mediating context with sign, author and individual reader, then we must acknowledge the possibility that critique is always too specific to be useful. In that sense, there is no criticism, there is only yet another paratext.

The Reader

Rabinowitz (1989) summarizes the perspective on the reader of poststructuralist models of literary criticism. The premise is that the reader is a perceiving subject, and, conversely, that the text cannot be treated as autonomous object. Reading becomes a process of meaning creation in which the reader engages, instead of something that happens to the reader. The notion of critique is part of and endemic to reading. Appropriate subjects for the meta-critique include identifying the reader addressed by the text, the locus of meaning and the authority for interpretation, and what kind of experience the act of reading/critique is. Allen (1987) offers an essentially

similar description of reader-oriented criticism as it
regards television viewing.

The emphasis of current literary models of criticism
on the reader is obvious, both as focus of critique and as
critical actor. To Iser (1978), the reader's place is
marked by gaps in the text that readers "fill in" by cogni-
tive structuring. Communication--as the construction of
meaning--begins when the reader bridges those gaps. But
Lefkovitz (1989) identifies a psychology of spectatorship
at work in reading texts that encourages readers to "con-
sume" the story--to accept the assumptions, morals and
values of the writer that are either manifest or implied in
the work. Deconstruction allows the reader to recognize
and free himself or herself of those assumptions. In that
sense, critique becomes not separate from but integral to
the process of reading as meaning creation, and the
deconstructive critique serves to help locate the reader in
the culture that surrounds him or her. As Edwards (1982)
reminds us, no way of seeing can be literalized as the
final representation of reality. Indeed, Barthes (1972)
rejects even the standards of good taste and clarity as
critical touchstones for the reader. The former, he says,
allows the critic to reject any discourse he or she doesn't
like. The latter constitutes ideologically based political
approval by a class of its own language. Anderson (1989),
citing Bruns, argues that knowledge and truth are not the
issues for deconstruction. Its goal is to expose the

problem of power and authority. The usefulness of that
strategy to readers of mass news media is obvious. For
Horkheimer (1978), the new individuality of the postindus-
trial age was defined by an attempt at self-preservation in
the face of more complex, mechanical, reified networks of
relations that combined to grind the self away to nothing-
ness. Deconstruction offers the reader of dominant mass
media a way to assert himself or herself in the culture
without disappearing into it.

Ong (1988) offers a rationale for the essentiality
of the reader-conducted deconstructive critique in his
analysis of technological shifts. Literacy, our current
technology, displaced orality. It was dominant from Plato
until Freud deconstructed it by showing that we are
motivated as much by our unconscious as by logic. Literacy
symbolized the invention of method and was a necessary con-
dition for the development of theology, science, history,
and criticism. Criticism analyzed written discourse in
terms of objective distance, necessarily employing
empiricism.

The logocentric/alphabetic apparatus of literacy was
reflected in post-Socratic ideology--the notion of the
unified, autonomous, rational human subject, the individu-
al. Indeed, the concept of the human self, the rise of
humanism, awaited the technology of literacy. Similarly,
the evolution of the public sphere that we now recognize
and even assume awaited the evolution of the notion of

self. The role of mass news media in such a social system is obvious. Mass communication of information is essential to the enlightenment model of public organization.

The obvious question now becomes the impact of the next shift in technology, to an electronic apparatus. In a real sense, a deconstructive model of criticism becomes a post-humanist approach to ideology and the practices of institutions, because the notion of the individual is also subject to radical revision in an electronic technology. So, too, the rationalist, sender-channel-receiver model of communication is thrown into question.

To say that the consequences of such a technological shift are profound is tautological. Likewise, it makes our current approaches to critique obsolete, or at best historic. To Derrida (1978), they might already be inappropriate, because they assume the truth of the symbolic logic model. Derrida proposes that symbolic logic is a false model. Instead of being a systematic reduction of noise, symbolic logocentric discourse is a multiplicity of noise, of multiple meanings for symbols. Discourse in its entirety becomes a network of puns.

In such a construct, or deconstruct, news is comprehensible on several levels, in isolation or simultaneously, if it is comprehensible at all. Rational argument becomes affective noise. The reader becomes the critical actor, as expert as anyone at critical deconstruction.

Deconstruction might offer a critical strategy that is sensitive enough to the notions of hegemony, false consciousness and the social responsibility of newsgatherers and their news organizations, but its weakness is in its similarity to empiricism: It substitutes methodology for theory. Deconstruction supplants the expert discourse, but it offers little to supplant the theoretical void. It offers a liberating way of seeing and an apprehension of critique as crucial to the reader's process of meaning creation, but the process needs a purpose, a teleology. The proposed model for the critique of news media offers that teleology.

Introduction

In this chapter, using the critical model as pro-
posed in Chapter 3, I attempt to critique news coverage in
The Gainesville Sun about one event, the execution of
Theodore Bundy in Florida's electric chair. The critique
should be looked on as an illustration of how the proposed
model can be used rather than as a formal experimental ap-
plication or test of it. It should also be remembered that
the methodology used, while inspired by the technique of
deconstruction from literary criticism, is not deconstruc-
tion itself. To label it as such would be confusing and
inaccurate.

Throughout the chapter, the critique using the pro-
posed model is compared with how existing critical models
might approach the critique. Those comparisons are offered
at the point in the text or context where each existing
model most likely would focus its critique.

The Story

In its editions of Wednesday, January 25, 1989, The
Gainesville Sun published 10 stories about the Bundy execu-
tion. The one on which this critique will focus ran one
and a half columns wide on page 8A, the back of the

newspaper's A section, next to a four-column color photog-
raph of death penalty supporters outside Florida State
Prison awaiting word of the execution. The story carried
the byline of Ron Word of the Associated Press. The story
was 22 paragraphs long. The three-line headline, in 54-
point type, read "Bundy/met death/humbly" (Word, 1989).
The story read as follows:

> STARKE -- Ted Bundy's steel blue eyes stared
> straight ahead after the state of Florida
> claimed its justice Tuesday, his death mask
> giving no clue to the murderous sex crimes
> that claimed dozens of victims both in Flor-
> ida and several Western states.
> The 42-year-old law school dropout defied
> the state of Florida for 11 years, eludingthe
> electric chair and exuding wit and charm as
> he maneuvered his way through the legal sys-
> tem.
> But when the state finally cornered him in
> the death chamber today for the murder of 12-
> year-old Kimberly Leach, a frightened Bundy
> went to his death humbly.
> He paused as he entered the freshly
> painted, gray-colored death chamber soon
> after 7 a.m. today and appeared startled, his
> eyes betraying fear.
> Bundy, his head and right leg shaved, came
> in the room behind Tom Barton, superintendent
> of Florida State Prison, each wrist manacled
> to a guard. He walked to the chair and was
> seated in the massive oak electric chair,
> built by inmates in 1923.
> As thick leather straps were tightened
> around his legs, arms, waist and chest by
> four prison officials, Bundy looked around
> the room, spotted his attorney and minister,
> and mouthed some words to attorney James
> Coleman and religious representative the Rev.
> Fred Lawrence, a Methodist minister from
> Gainesville.
> Lawrence had spent the night outside
> Bundy's cell.
> When Barton asked Bundy if he had anything
> to say, the inmate's voice broke slightly as
> he spoke, looking at Coleman and Lawrence.

"Jim and Fred, I'd like you to give my love to my family and friends," he said.

As the chin strap was tightened, Bundy's eyes widened with fear. He closed his eyes tightly for several seconds, then opened them, looking straight ahead.

A black leather hood was lowered in front of his face, as prison officials attached a metal electrode to the top of Bundy's shaved head. Barton walked to the green telephone on the back wall of the death chamber and spoke briefly with Gov. Bob Martinez in Tallahassee.

Then he walked a couple of steps toward the black-hooded executioner, partially visible through a slit behind a partition, and nodded.

The executioner, an anonymous individual paid $150 in cash, pressed a button at 7:06 a.m. sending 2,000 volts at 14 amps surging through Bundy's body.

He pressed backwards into the chair, as opposed to the violent, jerking motion of inmates in many executions. His fists clenched tightly.

The power was on for about a minute, half the time normally allowed to execute an inmate.

A paramedic checked Bundy's pulse at his wrist for four minutes, before unbuckling the strap across his chest and listening to his heart.

Dr. Frank Kilgo, the chief physician at Florida State Prison, lifted the mask from Bundy's face, and shined a light into the cool eyes that were staring straight ahead.

"He's dead," he said.

It was 7:16 a.m.

Prison Lt. Don Davis spoke to the media and official witnesses through a microphone and said, "The sentence of the state of Florida vs. Theodore Bundy has been carried out."

As the white hearse carrying Bundy's body left the prison, death penalty supporters cheered and quickly dispersed. (Jan. 25, 1989, p. 8A)

The Critical Process

Reading and Recognition

The first component of the proposed critical model focuses on the words, and then, almost simultaneously, on their juxtaposition. That juxtaposition begins to yield to recognition.

In the first sentence, or lead, of the story, the state of Florida is described as having "claimed its justice." Bundy, in death, is described as a man whose "steel-blue eyes" were "giving no clue to . . . murderous sex crimes. . . ." The state, characterized as claiming "its justice," is recognized as the appropriate entity to claim justice. Its authority is reinforced. Bundy, potentially a threat to the well-being and safety of society, is portrayed as already dead at the beginning of a story that unfolds as an eyewitness account of how he died. The state's authority and effectiveness and its right to exact retribution are thus reinforced at the outset. If the reader is conditioned to the newspaper practice of putting the most important information at the top of the story, then in this story the authority of the state is most important.

In death Bundy is still associated with "murderous sex crimes," and with refusing to provide any clues to them. The absurdity of a dead man confessing is concealed in favor of a juxtaposition of words that implies a lack of remorse.

The second paragraph characterizes Bundy as a "42-year-old law school dropout," conveying, erroneously, the image of a man who failed relatively late in life at a pursuit at which many succeed at a much younger age. Bundy is then described as a man who "defied the state of Florida for 11 years, eluding the electric chair and exuding wit and charm as he maneuvered his way through the legal system." The portrayal of a defiant and devious man ignores the legal context--that Bundy and his lawyers followed an appellate procedure established by law and precedent, one that has been followed by dozens of other condemned prisoners.

In the third paragraph, the clock is turned back, and a resurrected Bundy is described as frightened and humble. The state is described as having "cornered him in the death chamber" for the murder of a 12-year-old girl. The language is pure metaphor, and serves to reinforce the image of the state as efficient protector. Thus the story uses a model of truth that allows the images portrayed to serve as facts that reinforce the authority of the state and reassure the public.

In the fourth paragraph, the room in which Bundy is put to death is described for the second time in the story as the death chamber. The language serves to give legitimacy to the event by providing a designated locus for it. The description of the chamber includes only that it is gray and has been freshly painted, implying that the state

has prepared for the execution and so takes a suitably somber and antiseptic attitude toward the business of death, contrasting it with the spontaneous violence of the murderous Bundy. Bundy is described as hesitant—he pauses on his way into the room—startled, and fearful. But even his fear—an emotion that might evoke sympathy for him—is characterized by betrayal.

The choice of words in the following paragraphs portrays a process that is well-practiced and impersonal. The state is doing the work of justice, not vengeance. There is no mention of actions by state officials that have to do with anything but efficiently preparing Bundy for death. The reactions by the witnesses are ignored.

In the 8th and 10th paragraphs, Bundy's fear is portrayed again. His voice is said to break slightly as he speaks his last words. Subsequently, as the chin strap is tightened, his eyes are said to widen with fear. The reason for Bundy's wide eyes is assumed, as is the authority of the description. No explanation besides fear is offered.

As we can see, the word-by-word reading, the search for juxtaposition, and the recognition phases of the critique often proceed in parallel fashion and nearly simultaneously. At this point in the recognition phase, the reader asks whether the goal of the story is stated, whether its sources are cited, whether its point of view

and contingency are acknowledged, what context is provided, and whether the chronology is inherent or constructed.

The answers in the present case are obvious. The story's goal is implied rather than stated. Sources of quotes are identified, but the observer is acknowledged only in the byline. Neither point of view nor contingency are acknowledged. Context is limited to comments about the crimes that resulted in Bundy's death sentence and the fact that it took less time to execute him than it did most other inmates. The chronology is constructed by the writer.

In the recognition phase, the proposed model can also incorporate the context provided by other stories. The account of Bundy's death shared space on page 8A with an account of the reaction of residents of Lake City, where the victim of the murder for which Bundy was executed had lived. Also on the page was the continuation of a story listing murders with which Bundy had been associated or to which he had confessed.

The Bundy execution was also the day's lead story, featured on page 1A below a seventy-two point headline (Loughlin, 1989). The first paragraphs of that story are as follows:

> Theodore Robert Bundy spoke of the "destruc-
> tive energy" within him and admitted to as
> many as 20 murders before being electrocuted
> Tuesday amid an atmosphere of unbridled
> celebration and intense speculation on what
> he took to his grave.

> Bundy's death brought shouts of joy outside
> Florida State Prison, relief to families of
> his victims and tears to some of the
> protesters who asserted the death penalty was
> too severe even for the serial killer who
> plagued women in the Pacific Northwest before
> his deadly arrival in Florida. (Jan. 25,
> 1989, p. 1A)

In that lead story, the reader is reminded immediately of the crimes that put Bundy in the electric chair. The predominant reactions to his death are relief and joy. Bundy is characterized as destructive, deadly and a plague.

The next paragraph focuses on the family of his victim. One paragraph after that, Bundy is called a "diabolical genius," and subsequently given the unsubstantiated characterization "perhaps the nation's most infamous serial killer."

The lead Bundy story ran next to a four-column color photo of celebrants of his death. Below that photo, a three-column closeup of Bundy is accompanied by a cutline, or photo caption, in which he says, "I deserve the most extreme punishment society has."

Next to that photo, a story (Lyons and Trei, 1989) details the celebration across from the prison as Bundy was prepared for death. The excesses are remarkable, but the story reports them straightforwardly:

> This was not just any execution. It was
> THE execution.
> It was Ted Bundy's execution.
> And a throng of execution supporters
> celebrated outside Florida State Prison Tuesday morning as the serial killer died in the
> state's electric chair. They created a
> carnival-like atmosphere just a few steps

> from a smaller group of death penalty
> protesters, who still tried to share a few
> moments of quiet solemnity and prayer. (Jan.
> 25, 1989, p. 1A)

The stories on the front page of the newspaper carry a strong theme of retribution, of justice exacted and the celebration of it. The way Bundy himself died is relegated to the back page of the A section.

Inside the paper's B section are reaction stories from the Chi Omega sorority house at Florida State University and the residents of Seattle, Wash., where some of Bundy's victims lived. The former is headlined "Sorority house mood: one of sadness, relief"; the headline on the latter is "To some, execution brought comfort." A third story details how Bundy might have escaped the electric chair by pleading guilty. On page 6B, there is a complete transcript of an interview Bundy granted the night before he died to a fundamentalist family counselor with a syndicated radio show. In the interview, Bundy discusses his remorse, his belief that pornography may have led him to his crimes, and his decision to seek solace from his fear of death in religion.

Four of the 10 stories on the execution carry local bylines, including all three on the front page. The question arises of whether the affiliation of the writer--wire service reporter or <u>Gainesville Sun</u> staff writer--figured in the decision of where stories should be displayed.

At this point, because other critical models also wrestle with the problem of context, it might be helpful to compare the critique by the proposed model to the way other critiques might proceed.

The social responsibility critique presumably would employ as a measure the five standards for the press set forth by the Hutchins Commission (1949). The first, that the press provide a full and truthful account of the day's events in a meaningful context, is confounded somewhat, as Peterson (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956) observes, by the commission's failure to define or identify a model of truth. Peterson writes: "One gathers that the commission does not regard the chief aim of free expression to be the discovery of an absolute truth. . ." (1956, p. 102). Still, the commission's first requirement calls for fact and opinion to be separated, and for each to be ack- nowledged for what it is. Even if truth is not defined, facts at least are thought to be readily recognizable.

The social responsibility critique, then, presumably would focus first on the manifest content of the story or stories, of ascertaining whether the reported "facts" fit the observed events. The commission's second requirement, that the press serve as a forum for comment and criticism, carries with it from the first requirement that comment and criticism should exist separately from factual news ac- counts. Thus, the context the commission is looking for news stories to provide is not to be found in the form of

comment and criticism, at least not in the stories them-
selves. Requirements three, four and five provide more
help in clarifying the standards and focus of the social
responsibility critique. The press is to provide a repre-
sentative picture of society's constituent groups, present
and clarify the goals and values of society, and provide
full access to the day's intelligence.

Because the critique focuses on the manifest content
of stories, its search for context would focus on the back-
ground the stories provide for the Bundy execution--Bundy's
history of crime and the attempts to save him from the
electric chair, for example. Evidence of the representa-
tion of various groups in society would be sought in the
portrayals in the stories of the pro- and anti-death penal-
ty groups. In the reported actions of state officials in
the death chamber and the reactions of celebrants,
protesters and the families of Bundy's victims, the social
responsibility critique would find evidence of the stories'
attempts to clarify society's goals and values. Finally,
the stories taken as a whole would provide evidence for
whether the news coverage provided full access to the day's
intelligence.

The empirical critic might argue that the language
of the story and the context provided by similar stories do
nothing more than propose critical questions to be ans-
wered. Rigorous data gathering and analysis of the
manifest content would provide the proof to supply those

answers (Lemert, 1989). For example, an empirical approach might establish a typology of sympathetic versus antagonistic references to Bundy and other condemned men, and content analyze stories about each. Word and phrase counts could be analyzed for statistical significance using various parametric and nonparametric tests. Another empirical approach might be to count mentions of death penalty protesters and supporters at each execution.

The Marxist critique's fundamental notion of false consciousness might seek evidence of the blurring of critical objects--the event itself and the newspaper's coverage of it--and the way cultural conditioning and organizational pressures work on the newsgatherer to produce a story that under a capitalist system is seen as inevitable. Thus, given the constraints under which journalists work in a capitalist system and their own backgrounds, the front-page story of the celebration surrounding Bundy's death could not have conveyed condemnation of the behavior of the celebrants even if the writers themselves were appalled by it. The journalists' own training in the social responsibility-based principles of fact-gathering would have left them without the technical expertise or the freedom to convey the impact of the story adequately. As it was, the story did not "fit" any of the story models they had been taught to report and write.

The fundamental question addressed by a critical theory-based critique would involve the choice of where and

how stories about the Bundy execution were displayed. Specifically, the critical theorist might argue that the most important story about the execution was buried on an inside page. Looked at in its cultural context, the critical theorist would argue, the story that revealed how Bundy might have been spared had he agreed to plea bargain instead of going to trial gave the reader the most crucial information about the event. The story illustrated the inequitable administration of the death penalty by showing that those who exercise their constitutional right to a jury trial are more likely to be sentenced to death as a result.

In the critique as conducted using the proposed model, there are two other sources of context for the story of Bundy's death, although neither is indispensable to a reader-conducted critique of the story. Both sources of context are important to the Marxist and critical theory/cultural studies critiques, less so to the empirical and social responsibility critiques.

The first source of context is how the location of the story in the newspaper compares to where eyewitness accounts of other executions were displayed.

In its edition of May 26, 1979, the day after John Spenkelink was executed, the lead story on page 1A of The Sun included an eyewitness account ("John Spenkelink", 1979). The story began:

> The state of Florida trussed John Arthur
> Spenkelink immobile in the electric chair
> Friday, dropped a black leather mask over his
> face and electrocuted him.
> "He simply looked at us and he looked ter-
> rified," said Kris Rebillot, a television
> reporter who was one of those who watched
> through a window from an adjoining room.
> (May 26, 1979, p. 1A)

The strong theme of retribution in the lead story on

Bundy's execution, of justice exacted by a righteous state

on the cowardly killer of a little girl, is nowhere present

in the lead story on Spenkelink, whom a witness describes

as terrified.

Below a four-column picture showing the relatives of

another Death Row inmate in a grief-stricken embrace, The

Sun's second story was a first-person account by Sun colum-

nist H.G. "Buddy" Davis of the scene in the death chamber.

Thus, two of three front-page stories about Spenkelink's

execution carry eyewitness accounts.

The second source of context for the story that is

the source of the present critique is coverage of other ex-

ecutions by the same newspaper. Obviously, for the casual

or one-time reader of The Sun, the comparisons of eyewit-

ness accounts or the overall story count and display will

not be available. But for regular readers or those with

particular curiosity about the death penalty, the informa-

tion is either recallable in the sense of a general frame-

work or is easily researched.

The cultural studies critique would identify such

historical context as fundamental to a critical

understanding of the Bundy stories (see, for example,
Carey, 1983). That context, rather than the relatively nar-
row problem of the daily stories about Bundy, would be the
focus of such a critique. The study of historical context
would proceed along two paths: The history of reporting on
executions, and the history of executions themselves. As
Carey argues:

> "The methods, procedures and canons of
> journalism. . .are, like the methods of the
> novelists, determiners of what can be written
> and in what way. In this sense the techni-
> ques of journalism define what is considered
> to be real; what can be written about and how
> it can be understood. (1983, p. 5)

The Sun published 18 stories about the execution of
John Spenkelink. Spenkelink's execution was the first in
Florida after a 12-year moratorium while death penalty
statutes were being rewritten. Of the four stories on the
paper's front page, one, the so-called top strip, reported
on a wide-body jet crash in Chicago that killed all 272
people aboard. The other three stories on the page were
about the execution of Spenkelink, a drifter from Califor-
nia convicted of murdering another drifter in Tallahassee,
more than one hundred miles from The Sun's circulation
area.

Besides the lead story containing the eyewitness ac-
count, and the first-person story, at the bottom of the
front page was a story about the reaction of 150 death pen-
alty protesters at the prison. It ran next to a one-column

picture of Spenkelink's minister indicating how the con-
demned man had been immobilized by a chin strap.

The Sun devoted four more full pages in section A to
the execution and reactions to it. The stories described
the anguish of Spenkelink's family, his history of crime,
the last-minute legal struggle to save him, the scene in
the office of Gov. Bob Graham, who signed the death war-
rant, comments from Spenkelink's accomplice that the execu-
tion wasn't fair, a chronology of the evolution of capital
punishment in Florida, and the mood in the Legislature,
where, the paper reported, some lawmakers scrawled
obscenities on an anti-death penalty message before return-
ing it to the colleague who had distributed it. Only two
stories focused on the reactions of death penalty
proponents, although they were mentioned in two other
stories as well. The headlines included "For Many, Emo-
tional Vigils Ended in Outrage," "Outspoken Family Mourns
in Seclusion," and "John Spenkelink: A Good Boy Who Went
Bad" (May 26, 1979).

The inside pages featured six photographs of death
penalty protesters or of Spenkelink's family, including his
mother. There was one two-column picture of a death penal-
ty supporter.

Where the execution of Spenkelink, the virtually un-
known perpetrator of an all-but forgotten murder, merited
18 stories on a day when a horrendous plane crash killed
nearly 300 people, the death of Bundy merited but 10

stories on a day when its toughest competition was a story about two local cousins sharing a $9-million prize in the state's weekly lottery.

When the state's next execution after Spenkelink's took place more than four years later, on Nov. 30, 1983, The Sun ran five stories, two on the front page. The lead story (Owney, 1983), below a four-column photograph of Robert Sullivan's shrouded body being wheeled into a hearse, began:

> Robert A. Sullivan was put to death in
> Florida's electric chair at mid-morning Wed-
> nesday, fulfilling a sentence handed down 10
> years ago for the killing of a Homestead
> restaurant manager.
>   Despite a plea of mercy Monday from Pope
> John Paul II to Gov. Bob Graham, at 10:11
> a.m. 2,000 volts of electricity surged
> through Sullivan's body as he sat strapped
> into the oaken electric chair at Florida
> State Prison. (Dec. 1, 1983)

Sullivan's victim is mentioned, although not by name, in the lead paragraph. The lead story on Spenkelink's death did not mention his victim until the 15th paragraph, a paragraph broken by the "jump" of the story to an inside page. The rationale is obvious; Spenkelink's victim was a fellow drifter with a criminal record, a throw-away human being. Sullivan murdered a middle-class family man who had been going about his job and minding his own business.

Next to the lead story on Sullivan's death was a one-column picture of Sullivan taken two days before his death during an interview in which, according to the

photo's cutline, "he broke down several times" (Dec. 1, 1983). A third, two-column photo showed a death-penalty protester mourning Sullivan shortly after the execution. The second story on the page detailed the rowdy behavior of news reporters and photographers waiting across from the prison.

Part of one page inside the A section was devoted to the execution. One story described the vigil held by protesters. A short wire story ticked off the names of the men executed in the United States since 1976. At the bottom of the page, a wire story from Cincinnati reported the reaction of the widow of Sullivan's victim. The headline described her as relieved.

Reconstruction

The final phase of the critique is reconstruction to create meaning. The reader asks whether people are the focus and goal of the story, how the reader feels about the people and events portrayed, and whether the reader can trust the story.

The words of the lead paragraph of the account of Bundy's execution, recognized individually out of context and then reconsidered in a broader context, lead to a meaning construction that the affirmation of the moral authority of the state to claim justice is more the goal of the story than are people. Bundy is presented as dehumanized, both by the horror of his crimes and by the portrayal of him as dead at the outset of the account of how he died.

If the reader feels safer that Bundy is dead, happier by the truth of his death, reassured that he was at last "cornered" by an efficient authority claiming not vengeance but its justice, can those feelings, and the text that worked to arouse them, be trusted? The answer appears to be no. The reader searches the words employed, the choice of details and context, the decisions about what to include and exclude, and the constructed chronology to unveil the story's deeper level of signification, the appeal at an affective level for the reaffirmation of the moral authority of the state. The manipulation is revealed. The reader is left to accept or reject the truth as it is reconstructed by the author, the text and the reader.

Discussion

In each of the existing models of news media critique consideration of the background or historical perspectives would be typical, even essential. That in part is what distinguishes the proposed model from them. To the proposed model the background and historical perspective would be helpful but not crucial. The model posits a process of meaning construction that the text begins and the reader completes with the help of a common-sense-based moral model. For that model, the only expertise required is an apprehension of the need to locate himself or herself in the culture and of the human-centered values system that provides guidance for that process.

But the existing models all fail in a larger sense
than that the expertise they require limits them to partic-
ular and specialized institutions. None of the existing
models acknowledges the affective expertise that will come
to be required of the critique of mass news media. That
affective expertise, or the potential to recognize it, is
already present in most readers. The proposed model, un-
like existing models, employs a theory and methodology that
allow for the recognition of the increasing exploitation of
that affective expertise by mass media.

The shift in technology that Ong (1988) predicts,
from literate to electronic, carries the potential for a
radical revision of the traditional rationalist sender-
channel-receiver model of communication. The electronic
technology embraces both earlier apparatuses, orality and
literacy. It is simultaneously linear/rational and affec-
tive. To be sure, many institutions and individuals have
not yet felt the impact of the shift to the electronic
technology. In the case of television news, for example,
there is either an artificial restriction of that technol-
ogy to a linear/rational, logocentric mode of discourse, or
there is little recognition that the technology is multi-
layered. The newsgatherers might believe that their pic-
tures serve their words, that the impact of the words and
pictures works in combination, and that the combination is
a rational message.

Others have already indicated that they know better.
Among them are the makers of political commercials for
television. Their work pays lip service to a rational,
self-centered and democratic model of discourse. It pro-
ceeds linearly, with an alphabetic logic. But its impact
is in its images--simultaneous, multi-layered, and emphati-
cally and intentionally affective. The so-called Willie
Horton commercial of George Bush's 1988 presidential
campaign and the Ronald Reagan "Morning in America" commer-
cials from 1984 are examples.

The critique of news media is lagging. Although
that critique occasionally laments appeals to the affective
in political and other commercials, it fails to acknowledge
how the same process works in an emerging electronic tech-
nology. It likewise fails to address how our critical ex-
pertise must shift to accommodate the critique of affec-
tive, electronic messages. The gestalt proposed by the
prophetic McLuhan (1964) has lain ignored by many critics
for nearly three decades, but others who make no pretense
to critique have embraced it, often intuitively. The great
communications thinkers of our time may well be the men and
women who are said to be shamelessly manipulating audiences
through appeals to the affective. They have grasped,
whether by analysis, instinct or luck, the impact of the
technological shift. Because of that, they are in a posi-
tion to dictate the direction of the shift in technology.

When orality was the dominant apparatus of dis-
course, the family was its institution. When literacy re-
placed orality, the dominant institution became the school.
The direct contact by mass media with individuals that the
shift to the electronic technology will bring about will
bypass both the previously dominant institutions, the fam-
ily and the school. If that becomes the case, the dominant
institution will become the one that learns to control the
electronic technology. In a real sense, the entertainment
industry and the political media managers are so far the
only institutionalizations of the electronic technology.

But there is an alternative--control of the technol-
ogy by the reader who has learned to create meaning from
affective messages using the process of morality and the
methodology of critique. As Romano concludes:

> . . .(W)hat the press covers matters less
> in the end than how the public reads. Effec-
> tive reading of the news requires not just a
> key--a Rosetta stone by which to decipher
> current cliches--but an activity, a regimen.
> It requires a tough-minded, pragmatic nose
> for both information and nuance that alerts
> the reader to when a new key is needed. In-
> stead, the very uniformity of American jour-
> nalism tens to lull its readers into com-
> placency. (1986, p. 78)

Directions for Further Inquiry

As was noted in Chapter 1, the present inquiry should
be considered in the context of certain limitations.
First, it has been restricted to the critique of news media
as that critique is practiced in the United States. Sec-
ond, presentation of the proposed model has included no

attempt to universalize it to other cultures and mass news
media systems. Third, the inquiry has not included a com-
parative investigation of specific critiques, using exist-
ing critical models, of the same news story or coverage of
a single event. Critiques that fulfill the requirements
for effective side-by-side comparison are probably rare but
certainly necessary. Fourth, the model has not been tested
experimentally with audiences.

Because of all those limitations, the proposed model
should be considered a blueprint for a research program,
certainly subject to revision and further synthesis. The
limitations outlined above also make obvious the directions
that that research program could pursue: how the proposed
model can more effectively incorporate existing critical
models, how that synthesis can contribute to a more univer-
salizable model, and how effectively audiences use the
model.

While I have argued that the proposed model of
critique requires no expertise beyond the reader's own com-
mon sense, the model does not overlook the role of academ-
ics in the critique of mass news media. That role is meta-
critique, and meta-critique benefits from the broader per-
spective of familiarity with particular models that is the
product of academic disciplines.

Before the academic meta-critique addresses the
problems posed by the proposed model, however, a more
pressing question presents itself. That is, what is the

appropriate pedagogy for the proposed model? In other words, how are we to go about training the readers of mass news media to train themselves--to seek a moral balance, to identify and incorporate universalizable values in their common-sense critique?

Those questions define the next task: to teach readers to recognize the efficacy of their own affective, human-centered expertise, to conduct and to trust their own expert critique using the moral knowledge readily at hand.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Brian Edward Richardson was born in Escanaba, Michigan, in 1951. He graduated from Union County High School in Lake Butler, Florida, in 1969.
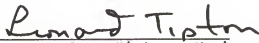
In 1973, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. While an undergraduate he worked in radio and television news. He received the Master of Arts degree in journalism from the University of Florida in 1975.

He worked in public relations and fund-raising for a year before joining The Tallahassee Democrat as a staff writer in 1976. While at The Democrat he covered business, education, municipal government and courts. In 1978 he became the newspaper's radio/television critic.

In 1980 he joined The Miami Herald as a staff writer, and covered municipal government, urban affairs and courts. He was also a bureau chief in Hollywood and an assistant city editor in Fort Lauderdale.

In 1986 he returned to the University of Florida to pursue his Ph.D. He is currently employed as an assistant professor of journalism at Washington and Lee University.

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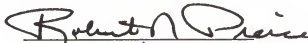
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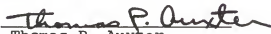
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This dissertation was submitted to the
Graduate Faculty of the College of Journalism &
Communications and to the Graduate School and was
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1990

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